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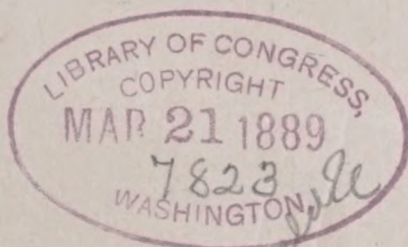
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PENNY LANCASTER, FARMER



BY

ELIZABETH W. BELLAMY

AUTHOR OF "OLD MAN GILBERT," "FOUR OAKS," "LITTLE
DOANNA," Etc., Etc.

35-

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By JOHN W LOVELL

TO MY GOOD FRIEND,

MR. J. C. DERBY,

THIS LITTLE STORY OF A GEORGIA FARM

IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.

PENNY LANCASTER, FARMER.

CHAPTER I.

THE AMAZONIAN QUEEN.

“WELL, I reckon you are all right now,” said the Doctor, and paused, a sort of professional trick of his, whereby his slightest utterances were rendered impressive.

He was a heavy man, looking much older than his years which were not yet forty. He had sandy hair that grew up straight from his forehead, a bushy, sandy beard, keen gray eyes and beetling brows. As he stood on the freshly-reddened brick hearth, his feet planted wide apart, his ponderous bearing reminded his patient of Fitz-James’s defiance :

“Come one, come all ; this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I.”

But Dr. Griffith meant to take his departure sometime or other, for he thrust his freckled hands slowly into his buck-skin riding-gloves, as he said, in continuation of his verdict, pronounced a few seconds previously ;

“But your strength won’t come back to you all at once. Make up your mind to that.”

The young man, his patient, turned feebly on his pillows, and let his slow gaze travel around the cheerless room, before he fixed his eyes again on Dr. Griffith.

“I’ve had a pretty tough struggle for my life, eh ?” he asked, with a flickering smile.

“Do you allude, sir, to malarial fever, or to my treatment of the case ?” said the Doctor with ponderous

jocularly. It was a maxim of his practice to furnish jests for his convalescents.

"Well,—to both," this convalescent replied magnanimously.

"Then you can attribute your recovery to Penny's faithful care," the Doctor declared, with sober gravity; and after one of his pauses: "She's a *good* girl," he said, with feeling.

"Her name is Penny?" said the young man, with the lingering speech of weakness. "It's an easy name to say," he sighed. "I must be pretty weak to care whether or not a name is easy to pronounce."

"You ought to begin to build up, now," Dr. Griffith remarked, meditatively contemplating his big hands in their clumsy gloves, though he was not thinking either of his hands or his gloves. "And—I should advise—professionally—a speedy return to—to your home, sir."

He suddenly bent his brows with a look of scrutinizing intensity upon the invalid, for he could not restrain an unprofessional curiosity, a curiosity that he condemned as ungentlemanly, also, regarding this young stranger, in the obscure little town of southern Georgia, where Dr. Griffith was doomed, as he then thought, to practice medicine all his days.

The young man—he was a very young man, not much over twenty, apparently—made an impatient gesture with his hand.

"I am not one of the kind to go back," he said, frowning.

"Ah?—Hum!" grunted the Doctor, with embarrassment. "Well, perhaps we may call you acclimated, after this spell." But his tone was not cheerful, and he sighed audibly.

"What day of the month is this?" asked his patient abruptly.

"To-day? Pretty well on in September," Dr. Griffith answered, cautiously. It was, in fact, the beginning of October.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the young man, raising himself suddenly, only to fall feebly back again. "Have I been lying ill here more than a month?" he faltered.

"Well, Mr. Kenric, these fevers are slow. Very.

But you are now well over the attack. Only you must take care of yourself. You must mind Penny. She can be trusted to obey *my* orders. She's a good girl, Penny Lancaster. Like her mother; but handsomer. You owe a great deal to Penny. I hope—"

The young man was lying with his eyes closed while the Doctor dropped these detached sentences one by one; but at the word "hope" the pause was so long that the patient opened his eyes and stared.

"I hope," proceeded the Doctor, gravely, having waited for this sign of attention, "that you will not be—ungrateful to Penny."

A vivid red rose in his face, contrasting oddly with his sandy hair; his patient's face flushed likewise, the sudden flush of anger: but Dr. Griffith cared not: he had given the warning he felt impelled to give.

"I shall not be—ungrateful to Penny," the young man returned, with cold mimicry of the Doctor's tone, and closed his eyes again.

"I bid you good morning," said the Doctor, a little stiffly. "I will see you again, to-morrow. What I call a bad position of parties," he muttered to himself, as he went along the narrow, dingy passage of Lancaster's Tavern, shaking his head, and jerking at the collar of his alpaca coat.

"Who says Penny ain't pretty? And that heart of hers overflowing with pity. And that young Yankee; Oh! confound him, I say! *Wish* Mrs. Perry Standridge would hurry home. *She* could take him in hand. Introduce him to *society*. Penny doesn't belong to society; 'tain't in her. Leaves all that to those sisters of hers."

As soon as he felt himself alone, Kenric opened his eyes and looked around the dreary room. The walls, covered with a coat of rough plaster, enclosed a space of twelve by eighteen feet; the ceiling was low, the floor was bare. The narrow red-post bedstead, in which he lay, occupied one corner; beside the bed's head was the one window looking upon the street; near the bed's foot was the door, opening upon the contracted, dingy passage. Behind the door was a shelf that held a row of books, and beneath the shelf were a dozen pegs on which hung his clothes. On the other side of the room was the fireplace, and in the corner, between that and

the window was a rickety pine table that did duty for a wash-stand. A splint-bottomed chair, in front of the window afforded the only seat.

Kenric's vision travelled around this forlorn room with fascinated persistency, impressing every detail upon his weary brain. "Lancaster's Tavern," he muttered. "What a miserable hole it is! But a young man with his fortune to carve must see the world in all its phases." He closed his eyes, wearily.

"It's no use," he sighed, presently. "I can't *keep* them shut; I *must* open them, and take in the whole cursed inventory again. There!"

And immediately his glance fell upon the fire-place, and rested there with some slight sense of refreshment; for a great bunch of cedar-boughs filled the open space, and upon the narrow mantel-shelf was a broken vase in which other green boughs were clustered, beneath a lithograph of Millard Fillmore, in a pine-burr frame.

A faint, dolefully vibrant sound rose from the street below to vex his ear, which made him turn his eyes in the direction of the window, with a muttered malediction on "comb-music," that frequent resource in those days—of the negro maiden with the fretful baby to amuse. The strain brought with it a vision of the dull, purposeless street, as little alluring as the room in which he lay; he beheld, in his mind's eye, the great banks of red clay that formed the sidewalk, the idle boys, black and white, playing marbles at the corner, the china-trees turning yellow in the Court-house square, the neglected red cow with ribs and hip-bones pitiably conspicuous, chewing the fallen leaves in melancholy submission to her lot, and the hot, autumnal sun shining over all—for here the sun was hot, even in October.

But hanging at the window was a green calico curtain which Kenric had never noticed there until now.

"It must be Penny's doing," he murmured, as his glance wandered from the window to the fireplace, and back to the window again. "'Green it shall be,' says the fable. Wonder if she sold her eggs—no—her chickens—or was it milk, to buy me that curtain?" (He little dreamed how near a guess he made!) "Why doesn't she bring me something to eat? I ought to have a bell. *Lancaster's Tavern!* Worse places there

may be, but I hope I mayn't be doomed to discover them. *I* ungrateful to Penny? Never!"

He fell to musing on his illness in an impersonal way, as though he had been some one else. He knew very well that he did not owe what comforts he had to the young men of the town who sat up with him by night, and visited him by day—well-meaning young fellows, but clumsy and stupid, so they seemed to him. It was none of these who aired his room, who kept him supplied with clean glasses and fresh water, who served him his food with an appetizing daintiness, not to be commanded in Lancaster's Tavern, usually. He knew that he owed all this to his self-constituted nurse, who was so quiet, so quick, so ready, and so patient with his caprices. He knew that after the manner of a sick man, he had made her endure a great deal of petulance and fault-finding, and he said to himself that Penny should not go unrewarded. He felt ashamed at the remembrance that he had accepted such service as hers as a matter of course, and when she came in with his dinner, he undertook at once to make amends.

She could hardly be called pretty, this crude girl of seventeen, with her great dark eyes, her sunburned skin, her white teeth and strong, capable brown hands, but she was pleasant to look upon, and in Morrison Kenric's eyes, between a convalescent's appetite, and a forlorn stranger's gratitude, she was almost beautiful, as she came in, bearing a little flowered bowl that emitted an appetizing odor of chicken soup.

Kenric essayed to sit up in bed, but Penny forbade.

"You ain't got to do that," she commanded. "Dr. Griffith he says you got to be fed lak a baby."

The sound of her soft, drawling voice made music in Kenric's ears, despite her untutored English, and he submitted to her decrees, because it was a luxury to be served by her.

Having propped up his head, she proceeded to feed him as if he were indeed a baby, tucking a towel under his chin, and giving him the soup in spoonfuls. Her brown hands were small and slender, with well-kept nails—Morrison Kenric marked that, for he had been daintily reared, and he was fastidious.

The girl fed him with a delightfully serious attention

to the task, and a childlike unconsciousness of the situation. She had left the door open behind her, after the manner of Southerners generally, with no thought for appearances.

"This is particularly good," said her charge; "but it's giving out too fast."

Penny received the statement with sobriety. "Dr. Griffith don't want you to eat too much all to onct," was her reply.

"I say! You are a famcus cook, though," commented Kenric between the lessening spoonfuls. Such soup had he never found at the tavern table.

"Never you mind!" said Penny, coloring furiously. "You just eat it and be thankful. It's the best I kin do."

The truth was, Penny, distrusting the tavern cookery, had appealed time and again to Mrs. Perry Standridge's cook, Mrs. Perry Standridge herself being away from home, else possibly Kenric had been in better quarters, for Mrs. Perry Standridge had a hospitable soul, and she dearly loved a presentable stranger.

"I *am* thankful, *very* thankful," said Kenric, as he swallowed the last spoonful. "I couldn't be more thankful—except for more soup."

Penny smiled. "You shall have a milk punch after a while," she informed him, consolingly. "Dr. Griffith told me."

Kenric sighed in grateful anticipation. "And they call you Penny? You're a good Penny, though you're always coming back."

"And if it warn't for me always coming back, what would become of *you*, I'd lak to know?" retorted the girl, hotly. "Nobody else would tek the trouble; not in *this* house."

"I ought to have said you were a good Penny *because* you are always coming back," Kenric amended. "I might have died. Dr. Griffith said so."

"Did he say that?" exclaimed the girl, with ardent satisfaction.

To know that this fellow-creature, far from home and kindred, and doomed to suffer among strangers, owed his life to her care, thrilled her very heart. It seemed to her that he must, in a manner, belong to her forever

after. She had the same feeling, only in a less degree, about every lame kitten or puppy, or sick chicken that she nursed back to health. Morrison Kenric had come to Lancaster's Tavern about the beginning of July, and so long as he was able to take care of himself, Penny gave him no thought, for she was shy of strangers, and this new-comer was not only a stranger, but a stranger from very far away, from "somewhere up in the North." But when he fell ill, Penny's compassion was stirred; she eagerly assumed the responsibility of his comfort, and her shrewish step-mother made no demur. "I ain't no fool," said Mrs. Lancaster. "An' the man is got to be attended toe particklar, Dr. Griffith says, an' Penny bein' a young gal is abler to look after him than me." So Penny shouldered the burden, and kept her own counsel. She told no one that she spent her scarce dimes to buy a curtain for her invalid's window, or that she purloined the fresh eggs from Mrs. Lancaster's hen-house to provide him a breakfast: and now she reaped her reward; he might have died but for her care, the Doctor had said it.

"Tell you what, *sir*," Penny declared, with an access of authority, "I ain't a mind to have you gittin' a setback, an' you ain't got to talk; talkin' is bad for sick people, I've always hearn tell."

She had the china bowl in her hands, and was going away.

"Talking won't hurt me," said Kenric. "What kills one is this staring alone at the same stupid things, and having no new ideas. Now *you* are a new idea. I didn't even know your name until this morning. I suppose Penny is short for Penelope?"

"No, indeed!" she returned, throwing her head up proudly. "It's Pen-the-sil-ea, the Amazonian Queen. I sh'd think you'd know, being edgercated," she concluded, with some asperity, seeing a blank stare on the young man's face.

"The Amazonian Queen?" Kenric repeated, with difficulty repressing a smile. It was ineffably comic to find the daughter of an obscure tavern-keeper bearing this high-sounding appellation of the Homeric Age.

"Of course," said Penny, with glib explanation. "She was the daughter of Mars, and she came to the

aid of Priam, King of Troy, in the last year of the Trojan War; she was slain by Achilles, and her body was thrown into the Scamander by Diomedes. I know all about her," she nodded sagely.

"Where did you learn all that?" Kenric asked, with amused surprise, puzzling over the fact that in reciting all this she had used correct English.

"My uncle Joe he give me my name; an' he told me 'bout *her*, an' soon's I could read, he *printed* it all out for me with his pen," answered Penny relapsing into everyday speech.

"I got that book yet," she asserted with pride, as she sat down again, holding the china bowl on her knee. Her dress was an ill-fitting faded calico, but there was an unwonted glow in her brown cheeks, and a subdued fire in her dark eyes that became her well, and as she sat there in an attitude careless, indeed, but not ungraceful, Kenric thought she made a very pretty picture, and was glad she had changed her mind about going away.

"It is a very unusual name," he remarked, gravely.

"Do you still go to school, Penthesilea?"

Penthesilea shook her head and stifled a sigh. "If I could go to stay with my uncle Joe, I might get to learn a little for *he* knows *lots*; but he lives twenty mile from here, to the cross-roads, and he don't seldom ever come."

"And you would like to learn more?" Kenric asked eagerly. "You would like to improve yourself mentally?"

"I'd lak to learn what 'ud be useful to me to know. 'Knowledge is power,' the copy-book says, an' I'd lak to have power."

"Power? Power for what?" Kenrick asked, more and more interested.

"Power to git away from here," Penny made answer, with unhesitating energy. "Power to help myself on in the world."

This was an ambition so nearly allied to his own, and so unlike the spirit that possessed the generality of the population of that region that Kenric's sympathy was keenly excited. He raised himself on his elbow, and regarded Penny studiously.

"Have you ever been away from here?" he asked, with a vague, yet irresistible feeling that he had met her elsewhere—in a previous state of existence, was it? Or was this thought but the ghost of one of his sick fancies, returning to vex his brain?

"No further'n the cross-roads, twic't, or three times," answered Penny, with a sigh.

Those visits to the cross-roads had been to her as little glimpses of Paradise, for there her uncle Joe had a wonderful garden, full of growing things, both for use and for show, and Penny's propensity, from earliest childhood, was to dig in the dirt, always with a practical view towards the reward of those smiles the earth bestows when she is tickled with the hoe.

"But Belle and Heneretta have been round consider'ble," she added, boastfully. "They're over in Berry County now. An' last winter they were in Russellville, stayin' with Mrs. Ross Maxwell. She's Mrs. Perry Standridge's cousin, Mrs. Ross Maxwell is."

Kenric fell back upon his pillow, "Belle and Henrietta?" he repeated, but rather as if searching his own mind than questioning Penny. He had been in Russellville himself, most of the past winter, and he had visited at Mrs. Ross Maxwell's house. He had gone to the place a stranger, to take charge of a department in a large school recently established; but there had been a quarrel among the trustees; the affairs of the school fell into inextricable confusion, and he had resigned his post in disgust, to accept a position of considerable responsibility as superintendent of the Perdico lumber-mills just out of Little Warrenton, where he now lay recovering from a tedious attack of malarial fever. Kenric remembered Mrs. Ross Maxwell of Russellville, and her house, and her hospitality; he hadn't quite so clear a recollection of the people he met under her roof, but he was beginning to understand the vague impression that possessed him of having met Penny elsewhere.

"They're my sisters," Penny was explaining, with a glow of pride, "an' they're just beautiful. *They* don't never have much to do with the tavern. They're older'n me, an' grown up. Belle was married at sixteen, only

her husband's dead. My paw's wife ain't *our* mother; *our* mother was a Donald."

And Penny drew herself up with a stately air, as she went out, bearing the china bowl.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLOOD OF THE DONALDS.

It seemed to Kenric as if he heard her in a dream; but the last statement struck a sympathetic chord in his own breast, and roused him like an electric shock. He had grown to manhood with the conviction that it was a good thing to be a Morrison and a Kenric, and here was an obscure, untutored girl in a remote, isolated, piney-woods town of the far South, proclaiming with pride that her mother was a Donald: He knew nothing of the Donalds, but he remembered now that he had met, at Mrs. Maxwell's in Russellville, two sisters concerning whom he had been informed that their mother was a Donald. They were handsome young women with some style whom he would never have associated with Lancaster's Tavern. And they were Penny's sisters! Except a faint, fleeting likeness, there was apparently, little in common between them and Penny; but Kenric was conscious of a distinct satisfaction in the discovery that the chronic scold down-stairs with the strident voice and untidy dress, was not Penny's mother. He had a long-pondered question ready when Dr. Griffith came again.

"Doctor—these Lancasters, what manner of people are they?"

The doctor dropped into the one chair and stared; then he threw back his head and looked frowningly at the ceiling, stroking his chin in meditative silence; finally he jerked his head down, dropped his hand on his knee, and asked, with a smile in his sandy beard;

"Is that—a conundrum?"

"At least it is a riddle to me," said Kenric, "I never

thought about them until now ; but Penny interests me, you see."

The Doctor started. "Penny interests you?" he said, and bent upon Kenric a look that was not jocose.

"Penny interests me—as a matter of course ; I am not ungrateful," was the somewhat impatient rejoinder.

The Doctor threw his head back, and gazed at the ceiling again, then bringing his keen eyes to bear upon his interlocutor, who was looking fixedly at him, he made this statement :

"Penny is the best of the lot. And I know 'em all, these Lancasters. They ain't—your sort," he added, with peculiar emphasis.

"Leave me out of the question," said Kenric ; "and explain to me what manner of people are these Lancasters?"

The Doctor looked down on the floor. "Penny's the best of the lot," he repeated. "I've known her since she was a child, I ain't so *old* as you might think," he interrupted himself, looking up suddenly. "It's the wisdom of my profession to look older than I am. By about ten years. I ain't forty. Not yet. But I've known Penny from a child. *She's* what I call a genius, in her way. Most people don't appreciate that girl. Her own family don't."

"I appreciate her," said Kenric, warmly.

"Oh, you!" The Doctor frowned and waved his hand disapprovingly. "Don't carry it too far," he advised, with a frown that brought his bushy brows together in a formidable line across his forehead.

"Go on with the Lancasters, please," said Kenric.

"Well, as to the Lancasters, you can see for yourself. Her mother was a Donald."

"So she told me."

This statement had the effect of a blow upon Dr. Griffith. He started and stared hard at Kenric. He would have given much to know how it came about that Penny had bestowed so much of her confidence upon this stranger, but nothing could have induced him to ask.

"The Donalds were a good family," he said, after a longer pause than usual. "Held themselves high, Used to know 'em in Habersham. Better family than

the Lancasters : though the Lancasters ain't what they used to be, neither. You'd hardly believe it, sir, but old Archie that keeps this tavern here has had what you would call the education of a gentleman."

"No, I should never believe it," Kenric assented with emphasis.

"Fact ! He can write a letter that for propriety of diction and execution can't be beat, but he has forgotten his English. He used to be presentable enough ; not that I remember him," the Doctor made haste to add ; "I give you the tradition. He had what they call a pleasing address and some money ; but Lord ! he never would have crossed the Donalds' threshold if the old Judge had lived. The old Judge was one of our aristocrats, sir. But he died, and Miss Mary Ann Donald, a beauty and a belle, after refusing the best offers in the State, picked up this crooked stick. She married Archie Lancaster, sir, who was too shiftless to take care of her property or his own. It all went under the hammer. Then she died, and he married his present wife. You can see for yourself. She is as much beneath him as the other was above him—even more. She's dragged *him* down. He took to keeping tavern, relying on his pleasing address, you see. When a man is good for nothing else, he can open a tavern and poison people with fried fixings. If he had the spirit of a Jack-rabbit, he'd touch up around here and call it a hotel. But he don't know how, and his wife don't know any better. The tavern don't keep him any better than he keeps the tavern. He's cumbered with debt and a big family. There are nine children. The three oldest are the daughters of his first wife. There are two sisters older than Penny."

"I met them at Russellville," Kenric interrupted. "Handsome, both of them ; but a little too much guitar and blue ribbon, 'Meet me by moonlight alone,' and that sort of thing."

The Doctor laughed. "That's it !" he exclaimed. "The blood of the Donalds. Lord, Lord, how people can come down in the world ! They shirk the tavern, those two. You won't find *Penny* shirking anything, let me tell you," he interpolated, with involuntary warmth, which he instantly checked, to return to her sisters. "But *those* two ; they cling to the skirts of quality.

They're an ambitious pair. One of 'em is a widow, you know."

"Yes," said Kenric laughing; "so I was duly informed; but everybody called her *Miss Henrietta*. Odd, isn't it?"

"Oh, no; that's our Southern way," the Doctor explained. "Married at sixteen to Colonel Lyndham's son Jerry. Runaway match. Wild young scamp, but tip-top family. The Colonel did some tall swearing, and pledged himself by all the gods in the back of his old Latin grammar to have nothing more to do with his son; but 'twas all bluster. In an underhand way the old gentleman kept Jerry in countenance—he was an only son; and when the boy was killed in a shooting scrape, over here at Glens Falls some three years ago, the Lyndhams bargained outright for Jerry's only child, a girl baby, two years old. It was a regular business agreement; they pay their son's widow so much a year income."

"What! The mother gave up her child?" exclaimed Kenric. "Well, of all the outcomes of your institution of slavery—"

"Softly, softly, my Don Quixote," said the Doctor, with a finger lifted in warning. "It was a very wise thing for the mother to do, considered dispassionately. She knew what was best for the child, as well as for herself. She's always on the make—and nobody objected except Penny. Penny raised Cain. She had given herself body and soul to that baby, and she thought the child belonged to her. It nearly killed her, when they took it away. Fact, sir! I saw her through a case of brain fever, compared to which, your attack was mild, sir, mild."

"Poor Penny!" said Kenric.

"Good thing for Penny," said the Doctor, gruffly. "Why should she enslave herself? That girl has a heart, sir," he burst forth, excitedly, "that'll, that'll—well, let us hope it won't break over some trifling fellow. She ain't like her sisters: they're on the make, I tell you, but Penny isn't troubled in the least with ambition."

"Oh, but Penny has her ambition, I assure you," Kenric declared.

"*Penny* ? What ambition ?" Dr. Griffith demanded pugnaciously.

"Ambition to cut the tavern, to get away from here," Kenric explained.

"Do you mean me to understand that she hopes to accomplish this by marriage with some one who—who *belongs* away from here?" Dr. Griffith demanded, his unconsidered words rolling forth like a torrent not to be repressed.

Kenric laughed. "What a brisk imagination you have, Doctor ;"

"You're a young man," said the Doctor, significantly.

"Twenty-four," Kenric informed him.

"And at that age," quoth the Doctor, "the judgment is green; the impulses are—tumultuous. Twenty-four is ever on the verge of folly.

Kenric laughed again. "You talk as if you had a commission from Miss Fish to preach me a warning."

"And who is Miss Fish, pray?" the Doctor asked, irritably. "One of your women's rights females?"

"Miss Fish is our family counsellor. She is deep in my uncle's confidence, and she makes him see things as she sees them. If she thought me in any danger of falling in love out here, I do believe she would come with banners flying. Fortunately she doesn't know where I am," he added, with satisfaction.

"All things considered, it would not be a bad idea if you'd go back where you came from," said the Doctor, bluntly, after a pause of some seconds.

"That will I not !" said Kenric, in deep earnest, but with intent to be provoking. "I've found at last an interest in Little Warrenton, and I'm not going back until I've proved my gratitude to Penny."

The Doctor regarded him with an expression of impotent wrath, but was silent.

"However," Kenric went on to say, with secret amusement, "if Penny contemplates matrimony, even remotely, I am none the wiser."

"Well, that's the idea that possesses her sisters ; advantageous matrimony," said the Doctor, recovering his equanimity. "But they've more talent in that line than Penny. Poor little Penny ! I don't see any chance for her to get any farther away than the cross-

roads where Gentleman Joe scrapes his fiddle to the hounds."

"Gentleman Joe?" repeated Kenric, inquiringly. The phrase caught his fancy. "Is that Penny's uncle who gave her the astounding name?"

"Old Archie's brother," Dr. Griffith explained, with a stately wave of his hand, as though he would relegate the person in question to the obscurity of the piney-woods cross-roads, "Consequently Penny's uncle. If you could see him in that beggarly sto' of his, you wouldn't suppose he understands as much as book-keeping by single entry; but tap him in the right spot, sir, and Joe'll quote you the Latin authors by the hour. That's about all the benefit he gets of his college education. Come to nothing; like old Archie. Lack of balance, somewhere, poor devil! Ought to have made his mark in the world. Far more brilliant mind than his brother, with all sorts of talents, artistic and otherwise. Knack at wood-carving and legerdemain; can do all the juggling tricks, but has no sort of go-ahead. About the neighborhood of thirty-five, I reckon, more or less, and a bachelor. Mrs. Archie is a warning he is bound to respect."

"It's from him, I suppose," said Kenric, "that Penny derives her thirst for knowledge?"

"Didn't know she had any such thirst," said the Doctor, blunt disapproval in voice and look. "The best kindness you can do her, is to get well as fast as possible, and leave her the liberty to live out of doors. She loves out-door life. *Verbum sap.* Joe Lancaster's not the only man in these regions that can quote Latin," he announced with a slow smile.

"I should like to meet Gentleman Joe," Kenric declared. "Not altogether for his Latin, you know?"

"You'll find him at the cross-roads, sir," Dr. Griffith informed him dryly. "He's a fixture."

"Penny is not going to be a fixture," Kenric asserted confidently. "You'll see her ambition will yet carry her beyond the bounds of this narrow coop."

"I doubt it, I doubt it," returned the Doctor, testily. "*However*," he added, after one of his customary pauses, and in a more cheerful tone, "Penny is young, just

seventeen ; there's no telling what good fortune may be in store for a girl of seventeen."

He drew himself up with an oddly conscious look, and paused just an instant, before saying, with an access of gravity :

"I bid you good evening, Mr. Kenric."

The Doctor had a long distance to go through the piney-woods, and he rode some miles at a brisk trot by way of relief to his feelings. "Poor Penny ! Poor Penny !" he kept repeating. "Wish to God I knew Miss Fish's address. I must keep a watch. That's it ! Poor Penny. There's nobody on God's earth cares half so much for Penny—but *looks* will go for so much with a girl !" He gave a spiteful twitch at his sandy beard, and then he beat his breast. "As if it mattered," he cried aloud, "when the heart—the *heart* is in the right place ?"

But the Doctor took wise counsel with himself, and resolved to be very careful how he showed where his heart was fixed.

Kenric meanwhile was concerned with the problem how to evince his gratitude to Penny in such a way as to benefit her most effectually without wounding her pride. The fact that he was for the first time in his life, absolutely without money to pay his landlord and his physician, did not concern him half so much : this situation, so far from depressing him, gave him a delightful sense of exhilaration in view of the necessity that was now upon him to solve one of life's practical difficulties by his own unaided effort. For this young man had set out, defiantly, to open his oyster, the world, and he was young and ardent, and full of faith in himself, and he did not care to find the undertaking too easy ; wherefore it pleased him to fancy his state of debt and impecuniosity more serious than it really was, since he knew that he had proved himself invaluable in the mill, and that his office of superintendent was still open to him as soon as his strength should return. In due time he would be able to pay his landlord and his doctor in good, hard cash ; but Penny's voluntary service was only to be paid in kind.

When Penny came in with his breakfast next morning, she was so dismayed at finding him dressed and

sitting by the window, that she nearly dropped the waiter she was carrying.

"Did Dr. Griffith give you leave?" she sharply demanded.

"Well, to tell the truth, I didn't ask him—specifically," Kenric replied. "He might have said no."

"After all my trouble with you:" cried Penny, setting her waiter on the little pine-table with jarring emphasis.

"The fact is, I cannot stand this room any longer," Kenric declared.

Penny glanced around the poor place with a hurt look, her eyes resting an instant on the lithograph of Millard Fillmore, her one "artistic" possession. "It ain't lak what you've been used to, I reckon. Whyn't you go back?" she said, with spirit.

"I can't, Penny," he answered, sadly. "It isn't the room; it's being shut up with nothing to do."

"You'd better be eatin' yo' breakfast," Penny advised, somewhat mollified. "It'll be gettin' cold. It's as good as I could raise for you."

"It's as good as I want, thanks to you," said Kenric, with keen appreciation of the difference between the meals Penny furnished him, and those he had eaten at the tavern table, an appreciation of which he gave practical proof by leaving empty dishes.

Penny watched him with satisfaction. "I'd a brung yo' mo'," she said compassionately, "but Dr. Griffith he was partiklar you oughtn't to over-eat yo'self."

"A few more such breakfasts, and I shall be even with Dr. Griffith," Kenric declared.

Penny fully intended that he should continue to have such breakfasts, though she made no promises.

"And if you *air* bent on gittin' out of this here room," said she, "I'll have these pillows and all sunned, and give a good dustin' an' sweepin, 'I jes' know."

"Penny, you are a genius? Why are not the rest of them more like you?" Kenric exclaimed, impulsively.

"Oh!" she sighed, and clasped her hands, and turned her face away.

Kenric was repenting of his words, but the next instant, Penny, unclasping her hands, and dropping her

arms with a despairing gesture, looked him full in the face. "I want to tear the whole kit an' boodle to pieces!" she declared, "an' make it all over again, as it oughter be, only it ain't keepin' tavern, *I* hanker after."

"No, I remember," said Kenric, eagerly, "it's knowledge. And I've been thinking about your—your ambition—"

"Ambition?" interrupted Penny, with a startled look, and coloring deeply. "I ain't got no ambition, Mr. Kenric, an' you oughter be ashamed to make fun of me, just 'cause I wuz such a fool as to let on that I wanted to git along in the world."

Her voice was trembling on the verge of tears.

"Good heavens, Penny! Dear Penny! *I* make fun of *you*? Why, I want to help you," said Kenric eagerly. "I've been thinking about it these last two days. Knowledge is power, as you reminded me yourself; now suppose you let me help you to a little useful knowledge? I'd really be so glad, you know."

Penny sadly shook her head. "I'm afraid," she said, with pathetic humility. "I don't know much to start on, an' I don't lak sittin' still."

"What *do* you like, then? Dusting? Sweeping? Cooking my meals? You're a famous cook, Penny."

"Lor *I* can't cook; an' I don't lak none of them things, neither," Penny frankly declared. "I lak to dig in the dirt, an' see things grow."

"My poor little Penny! I'm afraid you've had precious little of your favorite occupation of late."

"That's nothing!" she replied, lightly. "There'll be time a plenty for me to spen' outhen doors. Some time or 'nother, I mean to have land o' my own, an' things growin'."

"And you'll manage all the better," said Kenric, with unexpressed admiration, "the better education you have."

"But you see—I've got no money," Penny objected, with embarrassment.

"Money? Oh, Penny, it is I that am in *your* debt! Let us leave money out of the question. I've a notion," he went on to say, with unconscious prophecy, "that I shall be best paid by having you for a friend."

"Well, yes," said Penny. "Life is long, and some day, when I've got that land o' my own, an' things a growin'—" She paused and sighed. "But there! I don't know as paw an' maw would be willin' anyway," she said lifting her tray, and turning to go.

"Oh, I'll manage that," said Kenric, with serene confidence in his powers of persuasion.

And he rose forthwith and followed Penny downstairs to seek an immediate conference with Mr. Lancaster.

But Mr. Lancaster had gone to the cross-roads, Mrs. Lancaster informed him, "ter try an' see ef he couldn't skeer up a purchase o' fowels."

"Purvisions is mighty ska'ce, Mr. Kenric, this time o' year," she continued, dolorously, "but I don't see as appetites lessen accordin'." This speech, however, despite her dolorous accent, was intended as a witticism, and Kenric smiled.

"War you wishin' to see him in pertiklar?" she enquired, with devouring curiosity, and smoothing first her hair, and then her dress with her expanded hands, as in if preparation for an important interview. "A man an' his wife is one, I reckon," she continued, with a harsh and mirthless laugh; "an' I'm the bes' business man of the two."

She looked at him sternly as she made this revelation, for Mrs. Lancaster was strong in the suspicion that this Yankee wished to compromise about the payment of his board. "I ain't the soft fool Archie Lancaster is," she commented to herself; "an' he can't wriggle outen his board with *me*." Aloud, she said:

"Times is mighty hard, Mr. Kenric, an' money ska'ce, an' chickens an' new pertaters ain't ter be bought fer nothin', I kin tell you."

"No?" said Kenric.

"Ef it's any complaint you got to make—" Mrs. Lancaster suggested, assuming an offended air.

"Oh, no complaint, whatever. It's only a little matter about Penny."

"I s'pose Penny's been sassy. The hard-headed sotness of that thar Penny Lanks'ter, Mr. Kenric—"

"She hasn't been saucy," said Kenric with warmth. "She has been so patient and attentive that I shall feel

forever grateful," he went on, impetuously, his sympathy for Penny, and his indignation against her step-mother impelling him, despite his judgment to unfold something of his wishes to this obnoxious woman. "I've been talking with Penny, and I think I can be of service to her in—advancing her education."

Mrs. Lancaster, to use her own words, was "struck all of a heap." She puckered her lips, and said sourly, with a look of unflinching determination :

"We don't do business in that way."

If she had been Penny's mother, most probably Kenric would have dropped his benevolent scheme then and there, but she was only Penny's step-mother, and he could afford to laugh. "Oh, I see you don't understand me," he said good-humoredly. "I'll wait and see her father."

To this, Mrs. Lancaster made no objection, knowing that her husband was not the man to sanction any plan without her consent.

CHAPTER III.

DR. GRIFFITH'S SENTIMENTS.

KENRIC went out upon the piazza in front, and sat down in one of the splint-bottomed chairs, tilting it back against the wall, and resting his feet on a second chair. He had disdained such a posture, when he first became acquainted with Lancaster Tavern, as lazy and undignified, and altogether unbecoming a man who aspired to accomplish anything of note in the world; but, he had since learned that it is easier to accommodate one's self to the idiosyncrasies of a splint-bottomed chair than to make that uncompromising article of furniture subservient to ideas of energy and dignity. His musings as he sat thus, took a disheartening course, with *facilis est descensus* for a text: what incitement was there in such a place, to maintain a lofty standard? Better dwell in a cave, face to face with Mother Nature, than live in daily contact with a society so remote from all the broadening, strengthening, elevating influences of culture. He questioned whether he would not be doing Penny a mis-

taken kindness to stimulate her desire for knowledge ; if she could read and write and keep accounts, was not that enough for the life to which she was born ? What could education—as he understood education—do for her, but emphasize the barrenness of that life ? Always the same, ugly, stupid town, its trees barbarously lopped of their branches, and sending out a bushy growth at the top of their white-washed trunks ; hogs, goats, dogs, and stray geese up and down the streets, boys idly playing marbles all day long, every man in sight tilted back in a splint-bottomed chair, chewing tobacco, whittling sticks, talking politics to no end, or “ crops ” to no purpose : no energy, no invention, no enterprise, and a stifling atmosphere over all on this October day, that was summer still, without its glory, in this Southern land.

That there was in the South an altogether different social element from that which this town presented, Kenric knew full well. His uncle who stood to him in the place of the father he had never known, had many friends among Southern gentlemen ; but Kenric, having found it impossible to avoid crossing his uncle's purposes, had elected to be the builder of his own fortunes, and he preferred to see life as opportunity offered. But his patience must have failed him much longer to endure the aspect of life in Little Warrenton, save for his new-born, philanthropic interest in the tavern-keeper's daughter. Therefore he soon ceased to vex himself with the question whether or not it were a kindness to advance Penny's education ; he had already, made up his mind that hers was no ordinary character, and to study such a character in its development was a temptation not to be resisted in the dull world of Little Warrenton by a young man threatened with mortal ennui. So he patiently awaited his opportunity with Old Archie, determined to carry his point.

He was not left long alone to ponder the wisdom or unwisdom of his plans ; the people of Little Warrenton, dull, aimless, uncultured, had human hearts and human sympathies. The druggist's clerk, instigated by a genuine interest in the invalid for whom he had compounded pills and potions, crossed the street to take a “ cheer,” as he told Kenric, and after informing him

that he was "pow'ful peaked-lookin'," proceeded to 'talk crops.' The post-master likewise, having little else to do—there was a mail three times a week in those remote days—paid the sick man a visit to congratulate him on looking so "peart," and following the lead of the druggist's clerk, talked crops. They did not introduce politics, out of consideration for Kenric's invalidism, probably; the Omnibus Bill, Kansas Raiders, and so forth—topics of that day—were liable to generate some warmth of argument between Northerner and Southerner. But Kenric, having no planting interest, found nothing exhilarating in the discussion of so many bales to the acre, and it was a relief when the tavern-keeper's advent broke up the party.

Mr. Archibald Lancaster, as he naturally preferred to be called, was a small, spare man, slightly bald, with dull, blue eyes, and a beardless chin. Nature had endowed him with an elaborate graciousness of manner, but the habit of living in perpetual dread of Mrs. Lancaster's condemnation had subdued him to a sad uncertainty of demeanor at once comic and pathetic; but this morning it was evident that something had ruffled agreeably the tavern-keeper's usually stagnant spirits, for he was in a state of cheerfulness that bordered on hilarity.

"Why, *good mawnin'*, Mr. Kenric, sir; *very* glad to see you down again, sir, or *up*, ha! ha!" he said, offering his hand with an expansive flourish. "We may look for a change in the weather, pretty soon, I opine. Need rain badly; but rain won't benefit crops none, now; still we would rejoice to hear a little of the artillery of the heavens, eh, sir?"

All this he rattled off briskly, his sallow face glowing, and his dull eyes shining. Kenrick wondered whether he had been drinking.

"My wife," proceeded Mr. Lancaster, rubbing his hands violently together, as if to subdue his excitement, "I would say, Mrs. Lancaster has—a—intimated to me, Mr. Kenrick, sir, that you might—a—in fact—that you had some proposition to offer in regard to my daughter Penthesilea's education. A fine thing education, sir, a fine thing; went to college myself, sir, but the *res angusta domi*"—with a wide flourish of both hands, as

if he would express his whole biography in gesture—"as my brother Joseph would quote you. Presume you have the original, sir?"

Ignoring this exhibition of thread-bare Latin, Kenric went straight to the point. "I am indebted to your daughter for kindness I can never forget," he said, with feeling. "I would gladly make some return."

"Penny is a good girl," said her father, with a tremor of the lip and moistening eyes. He glanced over his shoulder nervously, for he was afraid of Mrs. Lancaster's ears. "But she's apt to be kinder quick, at times."

"She's never a minute too quick for me," said Kenric, remembering how promptly she had served his meals.

"Ah, sir, said the proud father, "you should see *the other two*. My girls *air* fine girls, all three. Their mother was a Donald."

Kenric struggled against a smile, and would not say that he had met "the other two."

"Yes, sir! Though I be their father, sir; fine girls, both, and entitled to something better—better than we have here, sir. Blood, like water, will seek its level. My eldest, sir, married at sixteen a son of Colonel Lyndham, as you may have heard. A fine match, but obliterated by death, sir, inexorable death. Henrietta is still a young woman, however, and her prospects are good for a second marriage, so I am allowed to believe. And my daughter Arabella, I have the pleasure to communicate to you, though strictly in confidence, is now engaged to a wealthy planter of Baker County, distantly connected with the Donalds. A match that gratifies the paternal heart of me, sir."

Kenric at once perceived the source of his genial mood and congratulated him.

"I thank you kindly, sir," said Mr. Lancaster, elaborately. "Their advantage will doubtless be Penthesilea's advantage also, and I should wish her to adorn the sphere to which she may be promoted, sir, by her sister's marriage. Hem! Penny has had but a skimp chance, heretofore, I am free to acknowledge; but, hem! Mr. Kenric, sir, business is *business*. I couldn't afford—"

"Oh, confound it!" exclaimed Kenric. "Don't you see that I am *her debtor*?"

Here Mrs. Lancaster from the doorway lifted up her strident voice, to proclaim her consent.

"Why, if it's in the nature of a free-handed gift, I ain't got no objection," she declared. "I'm of the opinion, Mr. Kenric," she condescended to explain, facetiously, "that it's jest as well to take whatever advantage a body kin git outen everybody else. It's a tough wrastle to keep even with the world, fix it how you will. And who knows," continued she, with a wink, "but what Penny may git to be a school-teacher, an' help suppo't the family? Though that's mo'n I count on from that Donald blood, Lord knows!"

Whereupon old Archie dropped his head, and meekly went away.

Satisfied with this permission, Kenric, while waiting to recover his strength sufficiently to return to his work at the mill, employed himself in arranging a course of study for the evenings, which being entirely at his own disposal, he was glad to employ in the good work of developing an original mind, as he enthusiastically judged Penny to possess. The mere study of text-books would not suffice for this work; she must have text-books, of course, and regular lessons in grammar and other necessary studies; but it was Kenric's desire to expand her intellect by opening to her a field of new ideas.

To his surprise, and much to his chagrin, he did not find Penny ready to accept this plan. He wished her to read Shakspeare, or to hear him read Shakspeare. "No writer so enriches the mind as Shakspeare," he informed her.

Penny had never heard of Shakspeare, and she had no aptitude for poetry. "I'd a sight rather know what would enrich the soil, an' make things grow," she sighed.

"Oh," said Kenric, disenchanted, "I see; agricultural chemistry and botany?"

"Maybe so," said Penny. "Whatever would be useful in managin' a piece o' land when I come to git it"

"What a practical body you are!" he said, not without

admiration, as he shoved Shakspeare aside, with a sigh. He had meant to experiment on this unfledged genius, but he was now ready to acknowledge that it was well his unwise enthusiasm should be over-ruled by Penny's common sense.

He confined his instructions to the useful branches of knowledge ; yet now and then, for his own distraction, he would insist upon her hearing him read some stirring passage from the lesser bards—he had closed Shakspeare in despair—and Penny as in duty bound, would listen patiently. He read her the Psalm of Life, he read her Excelsior, and Marco Bozaris, but Penny remained unmoved, even though he made her acquainted with Thanatopsis and Gray's Elegy, and the Intimations of Immortality.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed. "Don't these things fire your heart?"

"Fire my heart?" repeated Penny, with uncomprehending laughter. "*How?*"

"Why—inspire you to—lofty deeds?"

Penny was silent a moment. "There ain't no lofty deeds to be done 'bout here," said she, slowly. "Most we kin do, is to do the best we kin, I reckon," which was a lofty sentiment, had it but been clothed in appropriate language.

"At least let us go on with grammar," said Kenric resignedly.

"Yes," responded Penny, with a sense of relief, and a confidence in herself that made her tutor smile, "I know my ground in grammar."

But Kenric could not make up his mind to abandon his experiment. After an interval, he tried Byron in those well-worn passages that have taken root in school-readers. He recited with enthusiasm, "Roll on thou deep and dark blue Ocean;" he declaimed the description of the storm amid the Alps, and Penny said, calmly:

"I've never seen the ocean, nor a mountain."

This was the nearest approach she had yet made towards appreciation, and Kenric felt encouraged. His next attempt was to appeal to her love of nature, to which end he read her portions of Thompson's Seasons.

"It's all very fine, I reckon," sighed Penny. "But, law me! sittin' readin' it by the light of a lamp in this

dingy parlor ain't nothin' to bein' out o' doors an' livin' in it. 'Tain't no use; I ain't much good for poetry. That's Heneretta's an' Bella's line, you see. They're ahead of me."

Dr. Griffith walking the tavern piazza, caught these poetic echoes now and then, and fretted secretly. "What the devil," he grumbled, "does old Archie Lancaster mean?" When it came to Byron, he remonstrated openly, not with old Archie—old Archie was a fool, he said—but with Kenric. "You'll be turning the girl's head," he growled.

"No danger," Kenric assured him. "She's got the strongest head that ever you knew; not a grain of poetry in her composition."

"And therefore you read Byron to her?" said the doctor, severely.

"No, I don't," said Kenric, "only the school-reader passages; and I've given that up: poetry is no go with Penny."

The Doctor was relieved; nevertheless, he asked, frowning: "No love poems, eh?" And then he tried a futile smile.

"*Love poems?*" repeated Kenric, disdainfully. "When I am undertaking to improve her mind," he muttered to himself, as he turned away. "Censorious world!"

Could he but have seen the Doctor, half an hour later, in a pine-grove, far from town, mouthing to the moon, while he paced back and forth, and gesticulated among the shadows:

"It is not while beauty and youth are thine own,
And thy cheeks unprofaned by a tear,
That the fervor and faith of a soul can be known,
To which time will but make thee more dear."

"*That's* the sentiment of love, sir, as *I* understand it," quoth the Doctor to his confidante, the pine-grove. "Not a boyish fancy to beguile the idle hours. But a man, sir, a *man* in the plenitude of his meridian is nothing to a young sprig in his salad days. Oh, Penny! Penny! if you but knew the difference!"

Alas! Penny knew the difference full well.

The pine-boughs sighed above the Doctor's head, and the moon went under a cloud.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT?

“LADY down dar, suh, side o’ de saw-dus’ pile, axin’ ter see you,” said one of the mill hands to Kenric.

It was the afternoon of a day late in November. The sun was shining low and red through the forest of sighing pines that stretched darkly, and seemingly without bounds, beyond Perdico Mills.

Kenric, who was leaning in a reverie against a post, started at the negro’s message, and turned in haste, for the thought darted through his brain that Penny had come to the mill to meet him. The distance was three miles, but Penny was quite equal to such a walk. Kenric, conscious that his association with her had been marked by a grave and commendable decorum in keeping with his character of preceptor, and highly creditable to so young a man, resolved that she should not be encouraged in coming thus to meet him, and he went out prepared to signify his disapproval severely, and to send her immediately home.

But as he neared the great heap of saw-dust, his heart gave a great bound, and then for an instant, seemed to stand still; that shimmer of green silk, that cloud of lace never belonged to Penny Lancaster. The lady’s back was turned to him, and her parasol so obscured her person that his imagination had full play; a vision of red-gold hair, and soft brown eyes in a Madonna-like face made him utterly oblivious of Penny, of Little Warrenton, of the whole wide world; could it—could it be *Laura*? In spite of all probability, he believed that it was Laura;—the name which was to him a talisman never to be profaned by utterance in the prosaic atmosphere of Little Warrenton rushed to his lips, and he hastened forward with outstretched arms; but the lady turned—had she heard his cry?—and behold! a stranger.

A tall and graceful woman with dark hair and blue eyes, rose and dropped her parasol, to hold out both

hands to the confused young man, as she said, smiling :

"I see you don't remember me. It is ten years since we met, I think, and you were then a little chap ; if, indeed, *you* are Morrison Kenric?"

"That is my name," stammered Kenric, bewildered between a sense of unreasonable disappointment, and a surprise that excited him most delightfully.

"And you don't remember Sophie Elton who used to visit Miss Fish—when I was a school girl at Mme. Chegary's?"

"Indeed I do!" cried Kenric, and the color came back to his face, and the light to his eyes. "But you are not Sophie Elton still? And how—how—how in the world do you happen to be here? *You* don't belong *here!*" he exclaimed impulsively. "I beg your pardon, but this isn't *your atmosphere?*"

She shrugged her shoulders, laughing, as she sat down, and motioned him to a seat beside her. "Much obliged, no; it *isn't* my atmosphere, as I tell my husband whenever I can find occasion. But, unfortunately, Mr. Standridge owns a large interest in these mills about here, and so we have a temporary home in Little Warrenton."

"*He* is your husband? Mr. Standridge of the mills?" stammered Kenric, in acute surprise; for Mr. Standridge was much older than this pretty lady.

"Mr. Standridge of the mills," returned the lady much amused. "I'll tell him of his new style and title. *My* new style and title does not change my capacity for friendship. I remember you as a charming boy, and I make no doubt you are a more charming young man."

Kenric bowed.

"So I am going to be a mother to you," Mrs. Standridge announced, with a keen glance from under her lashes.

Kenric disclaimed. "A sister, you mean."

The lady shook her head. "A mother is what you need, I suspect, a very watchful, prudent mamma."

Kenric was conscious that he blushed, but Mrs. Standridge would not let him see that she perceived this. She caressed her gloves while she said, "You must pattern after me, and receive it as a compliment when I tell you that this isn't *your* atmosphere, either.

I was in much doubt whether you *could* be the Morrison Kenric, I used to know ; but the name is uncommon. Does your uncle approve?" She glanced up suddenly. "I don't mean to be impertinent, you know."

"I've quarreled with my uncle," said Kenric, briefly.

"O--h? Thrown upon your own resources?"

"Precisely."

"It won't hurt you," she declared, encouragingly, after a pause. "But pardon me—it seems so very odd to find you—just where you are. For you must know, Mr. Kenric, that the young men of *our* best families, here in the South, for the most part marry early and settle down to plantation life, or they practice medicine or law in some more ambitious place than Little Warrenton."

"I've no profession, you know," said Kenric; "I was to have been a banker, but—my uncle and I could not agree." And he murmured something about the advantage of seeing life in all its phases.

"That's all very well," returned Mrs. Standridge; "but you are not to drop out of your own station. I'll take care of that! I can't allow you to base your opinion of our society on Lancaster's Tavern. Little Warrenton is a pinch of a place, I grant you, but *socially* there is Big Warrenton which includes all the county, and is represented by the planters whose homes are beyond the river. On this side, the land is mostly pine-barren, a fortune in timber, Mr. Standridge says, but over there is the kingdom of cotton. *They* are the people for you to know, sir, and know them you shall. Wealthy families, all of them, who live sumptuously and entertain lavishly, people of education and refinement, whose daughters are accomplished and charming girls."

"I haven't the least doubt of it," Kenric laughed and colored.

"They wouldn't be very dangerous to you," Mrs. Standridge said, significantly.

Kenric was sure that she had reference to Penny, and he colored more deeply, not with embarrassment, but with resentment.

"Miss Fish and I have always been great friends," Mrs. Standridge remarked.

"I did not know it," said Kenric, still resentful. "What has she been writing you about me?"

"Nothing whatever. She doesn't know you are here, I am sure. But, to be frank with you, she told me something about Laura."

She looked at Kenric with soft sympathy in her eyes, and did not smile.

"I don't mind your knowing!" said Kenric, impulsively.

"That's charming!" And now Mrs. Standridge smiled. "I remember Laura very well; a lovely young girl she was, with great force of character that would sustain her under all circumstances. She is three years older than you, I think?"

"That makes no difference!" Kenric declared.

"Well, no," said Mrs. Standridge; "if you are bent upon seeing the world in your own fashion, and in defiance of your uncle, your devotion to your cousin Laura will be a safeguard; she is an eminently wise and prudent young woman. I am speaking to you, now, as a mamma, rash youth. Laura is related to you on your mother's side, I remember, and naturally your dear old bachelor uncle, Mr. Paul Kenric, doesn't cherish the same sentiment of kinship that you do."

"You are talking after the pattern of Miss Fish," said Kenric, annoyed. "Her mother"—he alluded to his cousin Laura, but he could not bring himself to speak her name—"Her mother and my mother were cousins; but it isn't a mere sentiment of kinship, I assure you: it goes deeper."

"On your part? It is well that Laura is too discreet to engage herself to you!"

Kenric frowned.

"But I hope she writes to you—occasionally?"

Kenric smiled, and Mrs. Standridge felt relieved. "I know just what letters she can write," said she, with approval; "full of wisdom and good counsel, and a calmness born of strict adherence to duty."

"You do not like her!" Kenric exclaimed, offended.

"Oh, yes I do. I am sure she agrees with me that you should not break irrevocably with your uncle *for any girl*. You know he has been a father to you," said Mrs. Standridge, rising.

Kenric was silent.

"But, meantime, my son," she continued, playfully, "I cannot have you at that wretched tavern; you must take up your abode with us."

"You are very kind," stammered Kenric; "but I—you know I told you, just now, that I wish to see life in all its phases."

"Very well," said Mrs. Standridge, pleasantly; "I won't insist. But when you grow tired of—what shall I call it?—*philanthropy*, come to us. Not but that I admire philanthropy, only, being a Southerner myself, I don't practice it. I'm too frivolous. My only aim, at present, is to create a little social diversion in this stagnant life of Little Warrenton. And you must help me."

"Whatever I can do," Kenric began, but his sentence was cut short by a shrill scream of distress.

"Mercy upon us!" exclaimed Mrs. Standridge, turning pale. "I had quite forgotten the child. Where is she?"

Kenric turned in the direction of the cry, and beheld an elaborately dressed little girl on the top of a great pile of logs. Her foot was caught in the lumber, and she was uttering a succession of piercing shrieks.

"Keep still," commanded Kenric, "or you will hurt yourself. I am coming to bring you down."

He climbed the towering, unsteady pile of rough logs, and with some difficulty extracted the screaming child, whom he brought down in his arms.

"Oh, Nannie! Nannie! what is the matter?" cried Mrs. Standridge. "Oh, oh! How your poor little arm is bleeding!"

"It was—that nasty bottle—of cologne!" said the child, between screams of fright. "I dropped it down in the logs, and when I poked at it with my hand to get it out, I slipped, and it broke and cut me."

"Do you think she can have severed an artery?" asked Mrs. Standridge, alarmed at the flow of blood.

Kenric thought not; but the wound was an ugly one, and he recommended that it should be dressed by a surgeon. He bound up the bleeding arm as carefully as he could with his handkerchief, and lifting the child to his shoulder, bore her to the carriage which was wait-

ing across the road. Mrs. Standridge invited him to drive home with her, but he declined, being unwilling to deprive Penny, without notice, of her regular lesson.

After the lesson was over, in relating the incident to Penny, he spoke of the little girl as Mrs. Standridge's child.

"It's not her child! It's my child!" cried Penny, fiercely, and burst into tears.

"How—*your* child?" Kenric asked, stupefied.

"Heneretta gave her up," sobbed Penny. "Heneretta is her mother. And everybody says it was for the child's good. Only I'd a died befo' I'd 'a give up little Nan."

Then Kenric remembered that Dr. Griffith had told him. "It's a shame!" quoth he, with the cocksure judgment of youth.

"I don't reckon maybe it's a shame," said Penny, soberly, as she wiped her sudden tears on her apron. "Little Nan's grandfather, old Colonel Lyndham, he's a high quality, and *our* mother was a Donald, 'Twouldn't do to spile her chances by a bringing up in this here tavern."

"But," said Kenric, who was now past smiling at the oft-reiterated boast of the blood of the Donalds, "they let you see her, sometimes, surely?"

"Not me!" returned Penny with bitter scorn. "They let her come, sometimes, to stay with Mrs. Standridge; but nobody don't never let *me* know. And I don't want to see her!" she declared vehemently. "Better forget! Better forget! Let 'em have her! What good would it do me to glimpse her by piecemeal? And that's what I've been doin', these three years they've had her. If ever I hear the Lyndham carriage is in town, I trapse the streets just to see the shine of her hair. And now I've got the chance, I'm a-goin', now, *now*; I ain't never promised not to."

And she ran out of the room, leaving Kenric to ponder on the great heart and strong nature of the tavern-keeper's daughter.

Mrs. Standridge met Penny graciously, and took her in to see little Nan who was sound asleep.

"She wouldn't know me if she was awake," said

Penny, tearfully, as she gently stroked the wounded arm. "Reckon she's hurt much?"

"Oh, no," Mrs. Standridge answered. "Dr. Griffith says she will soon forget all about it. It will leave something of a scar, perhaps; but she can wear a bracelet."

Penny stood silently contemplating the child, unconscious that Mrs. Standridge was studiously contemplating her. "She would be handsomer than her sisters," ran the current of Mrs. Standridge's thoughts, "if she only knew how to make the most of herself. There is something about her that her sisters have not. Is it *heart*, I wonder? Or is it what they call *character*? But she will never do for Morrison Kenric, oh! never, never. I hope to Heaven that cold-blooded, self-sacrificing Laura will hold on to him long enough to save him from such a match as this. Poor girl, I hope she won't fall in love with him. Dr. Griffith is the man I want her to marry. *That* would be what I call a suitable match."

Penny lifted her face suddenly, and Mrs. Standridge said, with a smile:

"Mr. Kenric is a lenient tutor, I hope? He made no objection to your forsaking your tasks, this evening?"

"I didn't ask him," said Penny, with blunt candor.

"And do you think you are making any progress in—in your studies?"

"I reckon he thinks so, or he wouldn't keep on trying," was Penny's answer.

Mrs. Standridge smiled kindly. "You are a very young girl, Penny," she said; "and young girls will have fancies. I suppose, now, you take Mr. Kenric for a prince in disguise?"

"I don't know about princes," said non-committal Penny.

"As in the fairy-tales, you know?" Mrs. Standridge suggested. She was very anxious to induce Penny to talk about Kenric.

"I don't know fairy-tales much," said Penny?

"Well, this is not unlike a fairy-tale," said Mrs. Standridge. "Has he told you anything about himself, Penny?"

"Not a word," said Penny, stolidly.

“Why, child, it’s a mere caprice, his present life ; a mere whim. He belongs to people of wealth and distinction. He’ll vanish, some day, and you’ll never hear of him again.”

Penny listened calmly ; she did not altogether believe this.

“Now your sisters will tell you,” pursued Mrs. Standridge, with the kindest possible intentions, “that you needn’t put a too-willing faith in any young man—especially a stranger.”

“I put faith in him—far as it goes,” was Penny’s astounding answer, from which it took Mrs. Standridge a moment to rally.

“I know Mr. Kenric’s family very well,” she presently said. “His parents died when he was a child, and his old bachelor uncle adopted him. The old gentleman is very wealthy and very ambitious that his nephew should marry with—*distinction*. It would be a ruinous thing for Mr. Kenric, if he should marry without his uncle’s consent.”

Penny burst out laughing. “There ain’t nobody for him to marry as I see ! she declared. “Why, even Belle an’ Heneretta—*they* don’t begin to match him. “I don’t know nothing ’bout the plantation girls,” she added, with sober second thought.

“Oh, the plantation girls—we’ll leave the plantation girls to take care of themselves. But, my dear little Penny, *you* are wise and good ; you must not throw yourself away on a stranger. I wish to see you married to a man in our own midst, capable of appreciating—”

“If it’s *me* you mean, Mrs. Standridge,” said Penny, a little sharply, “I kin tell you I ain’t begigged to get married ; I got somethin’ else to meddle my attention. I ain’t no notion of foldin’ my hands and waitin’ to be shoved along ; I’m goin’ to help myself get forward ; that’s my idea.”

And Mrs. Standridge was silenced.

When she detailed this conversation to Mr. Standridge, that gentleman roared with laughter. “She’s more than a match for you, my dear, with all your *finesse*,” he said.

“But what do you suppose she means ?” Mrs. Standridge asked in perplexity.

"Why, Sophie, what can she mean but that she will take the gifts the gods provide? I don't know that the Donald blood was ever backward in grasping at advantages; even poor Mary Ann who married old Archie *thought* she was doing well to take a man so much admired for his fine address. I've always been of the opinion, in all such cases, that what will be, will be, in spite of all interference. Such a match-maker as you are, I should think you would be for promoting this?"

"Give me credit for a little judgment," said his wife, reproachfully. "Plainly this would never, never do! It is my duty to prevent it. My friendship for his family—and besides, it's unsuitable—and besides—poor Dr. Griffith."

"What? You don't tell me?"

Mrs. Standridge nodded. "Yes, my love," she said, in a whisper; "I made the discovery this very evening, while he was binding up little Nan's arm. I'm quite in love with the idea. Dr. Griffith would make her an excellent husband. Penny is very different from her sisters, don't you know?"

"I suppose she possesses what Kenric calls 'earnestness,' ha! ha! You should hear him on the contrast between Northern and Southern character. 'What you people lack in *earnestness*,' says my young Daniel-come-to-judgment. 'Granted,' say I; 'but it's your confounded earnestness that spoils life.' 'I don't know of but one person in all this region that has true earnestness of purpose,' says he, by way of a clincher. Depend upon it, my dear, he means Penny Lancaster."

"Oh, you *don't* think he is *in love with her*?" cried his wife, aghast.

"He is in love with his own handiwork, I fancy, like the self-sufficient Yankee that he is. "It's well it's old Archie's daughter, and not the niggers he's after improving, or he might find more earnestness among us than he bargained for—or could readily deal with."

"Oh, come now, my dear, you promised me you'd never broach that topic with him."

"Well, I haven't. Fact is, I'm glad he has taken so to Penny. Your genuine Yankee must have an 'object'; and this'll keep him out of mischief. You let him alone."

But Mrs. Standridge could not let him alone; and so

it came to pass that during the winter that followed, Kenric found himself living in two utterly distinct worlds : the world of Lancaster's Tavern, and the world of Mrs. Perry Standridge, who seemed to live solely for the purpose of entertaining people in an easy, informal way that Kenric found delightful.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. STANDRIDGE'S IDEA.

MRS. STANDRIDGE, zealous in friendship's cause, hoped to deserve well of Kenric's uncle, and equally well of his uncle's nephew ; therefore, with a studied discretion she abstained from all correspondence with Miss Fish, lest she might be tempted to reveal what Kenric would not wish to be known ; meanwhile she essayed to win the young man from what she called his philanthropic folly by introducing him to all the pretty girls of the county. "For," argued the astute Mrs. Standridge, "it is not written that he is to marry Laura Dent."

It was her reward to discover that Kenric was by no means averse to the society of pretty girls ; but her reward went no further ; to her surprise and chagrin, she discovered also that he still persisted in his self-imposed task of educating Penny.

"You certainly deserve credit for perseverance," she said with some pique, when Kenric was dining at her house, one Sunday ; and as he was the only guest she could express herself freely. "Truly, I can't understand it ; I should not judge that the girl has so brilliant a mind as to repay—pray excuse me!—such enthusiasm."

"I am not aware of any *enthusiasm*," said Kenric, flushing. "I haven't attempted to estimate the character of her mind, but though you may not perceive it, it is plain to me that she is superior to her surroundings, and such a case appeals to the sentiment of humanity."

"Aye," Mr. Standridge interrupted, "my wife has felt the same stirrings of a lofty humanity, lax Southerner

though she is. See what she has done for those two Lancaster girls ! It has been her mission in life to unfit them for the tavern."

"Nature unfitted them for the tavern," said Mrs. Standridge. "Their mother was a Donald."

Kenric burst out laughing.

"I assure you," said Mrs. Standridge, with decision, "the Donalds are an old Georgia family of the highest respectability ; and the Lancasters themselves have seen better days. Those two older daughters are very creditable specimens of the blood of the Donalds, now."

"Whenever my wife says 'now' inconsequently, at the end of a sentence, I always submit," Mr. Standridge remarked, dryly.

"As long as they keep away from the tavern, people remember the Donalds and forget the Lancasters," pursued Mrs. Standridge. "It is *style* and management—more than beauty that does for them. But Penny is not like her sisters ; I can't see that she is so much out of place in Lancaster's Tavern ; poor girl, *she* did not inherit style."

"Perhaps she has the more *management*," said Mr. Standridge, perversely. "Remember that night she flew around here to see that little monkey, Nan, her sister's child ? One might have thought *she* was the mother.—The girl has got a heart—that's what does it."

"I see I shall have to keep an eye upon you, sir," said his wife.

"She means you, Kenric ; your philanthropy keeps her uneasy," Mr. Standridge proclaimed, boldly.

"My husband is a stupid blunderer, Mr. Kenric ; but since he has blundered into the subject you must forgive me for saying that people will talk."

"Penny understands me," said Kenric, a little stiffly, "and I understand her."

"Oh, I dare say Penny understands you—but as to your understanding her ? Conceited young man !" laughed Mrs. Standridge, and Mr. Standridge shook his head.

"At least," said Kenric, nettled, "I am conscious of the most exalted motives, and I am not afraid of idle gossip."

"Let him alone," said Mr. Standridge, good-humoredly ; "he will learn a lesson."

But Kenric argued that if a man allowed himself to be deterred by criticism or suspicion, he would never accomplish any good in the world ; he therefore turned a deaf ear to Mrs. Standridge's warning, and continued to instruct Penny in the little stuffy, unused parlor, in spite of the covert ridicule of the inmates of Lancaster's Tavern ; and the tongues of Little Warrenton wagged with vaticinations various as to the outcome of "so much education."

Dr. Griffith, who had built his hopes on the distractions Mrs. Standridge would be able to offer, was perplexed and enraged to find that Kenric was not to be turned from his purpose of developing Penny's talents by any gayeties of that gay lady's invention, and when he heard the gossip on the subject, he made up his mind to remonstrate seriously with Kenric.

"Confound him !" the Doctor growled. "Why couldn't he be content to let the girl alone ? That was all I meant when, like a fool, I had to go talk of the gratitude he owes Penny. It's his meddlesome Yankee conscience, I suppose, improving the condition of the ignorant. Putting notions in the girl's head to the destruction of her happiness. He sha'n't do it. I'll go now and have it out with him. Sitting there, tilted back in his chair under the China-trees, as if he were a born Southerner."

For the spring had come, the trees were in leaf, and all men of leisure sat out of doors, tilted back in the splint-bottomed chair.

The lengthened afternoon enabled Kenric to return from the mill before night-fall, and thus he too had leisure for the splint-bottomed chair, and a pipe under the trees ; for since he came to Little Warrenton, a pipe had commended itself to him as being cheaper than cigars. But he smoked in solitude, reading a letter which he had received the day before, and which he had no need to read, for he knew it by heart. His face was pale and stern, and frowning, and did not invite company ; but Dr. Griffith was not to be deterred by any frown.

"See here, Kenric," said he, planting himself in front of the young man, "I've a word to say to you."

Kenric crushed the letter into his coat-pocket, removed his pipe and summoned a smile, as he responded :

"Say it! Provided it isn't quinine or calomel, I'll hear you with pleasure. The time of the year hasn't yet come round for conjuring with such words as those."

"I'm not forjoking," said the Doctor, sharply. "It's about Penny."

"What about Penny?" asked Kenric, frowning. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and faced the Doctor resolutely.

"And I wish I had said it long ago!" declared the Doctor with energy. "What do you mean, Kenric? About Penny, you know?"

"What do I *mean*?" said Kenric, angrily. "What do *you* mean?"

"It's a question all the town is asking," said the Doctor, growing cool, as Kenric waxed warm. "The question I've put to you."

"Well, *her father* hasn't asked it," said Kenric; "and if he has confidence enough in me——"

"That's not the point," interrupted the Doctor. "Old Archie Lancaster—good Lord! What *sense* do you expect from that old brow-beaten puppet? I don't question your motives—but the effect on the girl—of all this—this *interest* on your part? Improving her mind. 'Tain't good for her."

"You are absurd," said Kenric. "Penny is a child."

"She is not a child. Begging your pardon. She is seventeen years and better."

"Make yourself easy," said Kenric, with composure. "Penny understands me, you may be sure."

"It's what these young bloods call a flirtation," growled the Doctor, as Kenric rose and walked away, to the tune of the tavern bell, ringing for tea. 'Twon't hurt *him*. It's *his* pastime. But what if Penny's affections are wrecked?" And as he could not tamely submit to such a calamity befalling the girl he loved, he determined to leave no effort untried to prevent it. Kenric refused to hear him, and he knew the futility of appealing to Penny's inefficient father, but he hoped, in desperation, to effect something through Penny's sisters, who had recently returned to the shelter of the tavern

for a brief season, as was their custom, before undertaking a fresh round of visits.

Old Archibald Lancaster, mindful always that their mother was a Donald, had fitted up a private parlor for his daughters, to which there was a private entrance through a porch covered with vines. To this private entrance Dr. Griffith immediately made his way. His appetite for the evening meal was annihilated by his eagerness to do Penny a service, and he knew very well that Penny's sisters never appeared at the tavern table.

He found the ladies in their boudoir, as they termed the small parlor at the head of the stairs, a room that bore some signs of taste and refinement, and was a marked contrast to the little den downstairs where Penny had her evening lessons.

Penny's sisters were handsome women of a somewhat showy type, with dark hair and eyes, and a studied graciousness of demeanor that never failed them. Mrs. Lyndham, whom it was the Southern fashion still to address as Miss Henrietta, in familiar converse, was the more dignified; Miss Arabella was coquettish. They were very busy with their needles, as was usually the case when they returned to the tavern, the haven where they took refuge for repairs: but they laid aside their work, and received the Doctor graciously, though they laughed at him behind his back.

"I didn't know you ever called on ladies," said Miss Arabella, with a smile that was meant to be arch.

"Well, I don't, as a rule," returned the Doctor, bluntly; "unless they send for me."

"And we didn't send for you! How very kind," said Mrs. Lyndham, sweetly.

The Doctor ran his fingers through his hair, until it stood up all over his head, giving him a very fierce aspect, as he stared at the sisters.

"I haven't much time to waste," said he, in a tone meant to be conciliating, but which was oddly aggressive. "It's a matter of business brought me to-day."

"Here's my pulse!" cried Miss Arabella, gayly, as she rolled back her sleeve and displayed the dimpled beauty of her arm.

"I wish you'd ignore my profession," said the Doc-

tor gruffly. "I'm here as *a man*. Full of indignation. It's about your sister Penny."

"What about Penny?" Mrs. Lyndham asked, languidly, yet not without interest.

"See here, now," said the Doctor, calming himself. "Your mother was a Donald. And Penny is your own sister. *Your own* sister. *Where* do you think all this is going to end?" he asked desperately.

The sisters looked at each other and were silent. They had been at home but a few days, yet they understood him perfectly.

"It's no use going to your father, nor to Mrs. Lancaster." The Doctor never could bring himself to speak of old Archie's second wife as the mother of these girls. "But I've been to *him*. And I tell you *that's* no use, either."

"Have you been to Penny, Doctor?" Miss Arabella asked, with a sly smile, and when he hung his head, the smile threatened to become a laugh.

"You've been around, and you've seen the world," pursued the Doctor, recovering himself, with a frown, and ignoring Miss Arabella's flippant speech; "you two ought to take care of her."

"A Donald may be trusted to take care of herself," said the widowed sister, serenely. "Penny will not be blind to her own advantage."

"Good Lord!" cried the Doctor, bouncing up. "You don't begin to understand. That Yankee is just amusin' himself. Penny ain't up to—the ways of—society. 'Tain't as if it was *you*. Can't you see how it's goin' to end?" he demanded, fiercely, seizing the back of a chair, and leaning over it, as if to emphasize what he said somewhere in the region of his heart. "That confounded Yankee'll skip some day——"

"And Penny'll skip with him," interpolated Miss Arabella with satisfaction.

The Doctor glared at her furiously. "And Penny will pine—and *pine*. She is of that kind," he said, sinking his voice to a whisper.

"*Why* should she pine? The Donald's have no prejudices. If our sister can marry well, we sha'n't object to a Northerner."

"It seems to me," said the Doctor, angrily, "that

there isn't a grain of commonsense among the whole lot of you."

And he turned and left the sisters to the manipulation of their ribbons and flounces, and went out, debating with himself whether or not he should speak to Penny, though he was conscious of a humiliating cowardice in prospect of an interview with that young person.

The sisters, when they knew themselves alone, looked at each other and laughed.

"I am not going to interfere," said Mrs. Lyndham.

"No more shall I," declared Arabella. "Penny is no fool."

Dr. Griffith could not make up his mind to seek Penny straightway, but he met her unexpectedly in the passage that led by the parlor, which he noticed was not lighted.

"What has become of the lessons to-night?" He asked, grimly.

"No lessons to-night," answered Penny with placidity.

"Mr. Kenric has gone to see Mrs. Standridge. He said he had to consult her."

"Ah, indeed?" said the Doctor, brightening. Kenric must have given up the lessons that evening, he argued, in consequence of the remonstrance administered before tea; and if he consulted Mrs. Standridge about Penny, Mrs. Standridge, the man of medicine knew full well, would give him sound advice, that is to say, advice in accordance with Dr. Griffith's own views.

His mind thus relieved, Dr. Griffith all at once found himself very hungry, and begged to know if he might have something to eat.

"I reckon so," said Penny, glancing over her shoulder towards the dining-room; but she did not offer to go and forage for him as Dr. Griffith felt sure she would have done, had he been Kenric: but Kenric was gone to see Mrs. Standridge, and that was a comfort.

Mrs. Standridge was crocheting by the light of a shaded lamp when Kenric entered her elaborately furnished parlor.

"All alone?" he asked, glancing around the room. He had hoped to find her alone.

"All alone; but very glad to have company," said she, as she threw down her work, and rose to meet him.

But what is the matter with you? You don't look like yourself."

Kenric did not answer immediately, but when he had taken his seat, he said, with a strained smile:

"Do you remember your offer to be a mother to me?"

"Is it advice you want?" Mrs. Standridge asked, divided between a vague alarm, and a genuine interest.

"No, not advice; it is sympathy I came for.

"Sympathy?" she faltered, "What is the matter? Of course you have my sympathy, whatever has happened."

"I've had a letter from Laura." And Kenric rose and walked about the room in great agitation.

"Is it so unusual to have a letter from Laura?" Mrs. Standridge asked, with an attempt at playfulness.

"Not unusual. She has written to me heretofore, with some regularity. But—this is the last I shall ever have from her," and his face quivered so that Mrs. Standridge looked away from him, and could find nothing more to say than a murmured repetition of the words:

"The last?"

"If I could be sure we should not be interrupted, I would like to tell you all about it," said Kenric.

"There is nothing to interrupt; Mr. Standridge is taking a nap, he won't wake for an hour. If he comes in I'll tell him to go out again. *What* about Laura?" Mrs. Standridge was full of curiosity not unmingled with a fear that some deplorable complication threatened to make shipwreck of Kenric's future.

"She is married! Actually married!" Kenric groaned.

"Married?" repeated Mrs. Standridge, struggling to mask her satisfaction at this news, though she realized, at the same time, that a strong restraining influence upon Kenric was lost in his cousin's marriage.

"To Mr. Cameron. I don't know whether you ever met him. He has been, longer than I can remember, the self-constituted providence of the whole Dent connection. Would you have believed it of *Laura*?" Kenric asked bitterly.

Mrs. Standridge looked at Kenric with pity in her eyes before she replied, impulsively:

"My friend, I will be frank with you! It is exactly what I would have expected of *Laura Dent*."

Kenric recoiled. "And you told me that you liked her?" he said, reproachfully,

"*Admire*, is the word I should have used. I have always admired Laura; she is the embodiment of judiciousness."

"You are unjust!" exclaimed Kenric. "And I came to you for sympathy!"

"It is out of my sympathy for you that I speak, my poor boy. But I will say this much for Laura; she never married without just reason for the step."

Kenric missed the covert sarcasm.

"Yes," he said, eagerly; "it was from a sense of duty."

Mrs. Standridge felt strongly urged to declare her detestation of people who acted from a sense of duty; but she contented herself with saying:

"Laura always had a strong sense of duty."

Kenric darted a keen, inquiring glance at her; but for once, Mrs. Standridge's countenance was impenetrable.

"You must—you shall do her justice," he cried eagerly. "Her mother an invalid, her own health never strong; and their means so straitened—her gratitude to Mr. Cameron, and her fear of provoking my uncle's unappeasable wrath against me if she listened to my suit—"

"He is quoting from her letter," Mrs. Standridge commented silently, as Kenric paused.

"Oh, you do not know Laura as I know her," he continued passionately. "Always thinking of the interest of others. She entreats me now to return; she says that in ceasing to be Laura Dent the great obstacle to my uncle's good-will is removed. Dear, dearest Laura, I can forgive—I pray she may be happy. It is my uncle I can never forgive."

He bowed his head in his hands and sobbed aloud.

Mrs. Standridge put her hand on his arm caressingly.

"My dear Morrison," she said. "I used to call you Morrison, you know, when you were a boy, and I am several years older than you."

"She was never engaged to me, you know," said Kenric, controlling himself with effort.

"No; and she never loved you, really. It is best

that you should know the truth, and know it at once. And you never loved her—really.”

Kenric made a movement of impatience.

“You will find it out for yourself, in time,” Mrs. Standridge insisted. “And now let me beg you to follow Laura’s advice—and *mine*—and go back to your uncle—” For Mrs. Standridge was now more than ever alive to the danger that lurked in Kenric’s association with Penny Lancaster; such a marriage would be infinitely more obnoxious to old Mr. Kenric than a marriage with Laura Dent. “Go back without delay,” she urged.

“Never!” cried Kenric. “I will never be *thrust* back, by any turn of fate.”

“Do you intend to make Little Warrenton your permanent home?” asked Mrs. Standridge, significantly.

Kenric frowned. “I know what you mean,” he said. “You are afraid I will marry Penny Lancaster. As if I could not see the difference between my cousin Laura and a poor little untutored tavern-girl that I am trying to help.”

“I *am* afraid of that very thing,” she replied, frankly. “I am afraid both for you and for Penny. It would never do. Penny is an admirable girl—”

“Yes; she is!” said Kenric, warmly.

“For her—station, yes. And I hope, some day to see her married to some one better suited to her than you can ever be. There!”

Kenric smiled, but said nothing; and if Mrs. Standridge had stopped there, she had been wise; but she went on to say:

“Of course you know whom I mean. Dr. Griffith is deeply in love with her.”

“Which nobody can deny!” said Kenric, with a laugh.

“A devoted attachment is never a thing for laughter,” said Mrs. Standridge, with grave rebuke.

“Penny isn’t in love with him!” Kenric declared, exultantly.

“Not yet! but—”

“You don’t mean to tell me,” Kenric interrupted in a tone of intense disgust, “that that unique girl, with her originality of character, her superiority to the tavern, is

destined to nothing more unusual than a marriage with a plodding, commonplace, unprogressive piney-woods doctor, years older than she is—”

“You will please remember that I married a man ‘years older’ than myself,” Mrs. Standridge interrupted.

“Oh, I beg your pardon,” said Kenric, adroitly; “I never can remember that Mr. Standridge doesn’t impress one in that way. And he is very different from Dr. Griffith. Poor Dr. Griffith! The idea of Penny—”

“He would make her an excellent husband,” Mrs. Standridge insisted. “He has known her all his life, and he has no prejudices to overcome. He understands her position perfectly. He *knew* the Donalds—”

“And was *his* mother a Donald, too?” asked Kenric, laughing.

“No,” Mrs. Standridge replied, with dignified gravity; “his mother was a Barnet of Habersham, his father was a Scotchman. Dr. Griffith is an educated man; if you have remarked it, his English is always that of an educated man. I have a great respect for Dr. Griffith.”

“Why, so have I,” said Kenric.

But the idea that he should have taken so much pains with Penny to see her become the wife of Dr. Griffith, was, for some unaccountable reason, strangely repugnant to him. He sat silent while Mrs. Standridge descanted on the advantages of so admirable a match; so that when he left she was not without hope that she had raised an effectual barrier against that rebound of the heart which is supposed to render the victim thereof dangerously susceptible.

CHAPTER VI.

IT IS THE UNEXPECTED THAT HAPPENS.

KENRIC was but twenty-four, and at twenty-four a very small spark may serve to kindle a great flame. He returned to his room in Lancaster’s Tavern indignant against Mrs. Standridge not only on account of her opinion of his cousin Laura, but also because of her views regarding Penny Lancaster. He decided that

Mrs. Standridge was not a just person, and he resolved never to go to her again for sympathy. But by dint of dwelling on the subject from day to day, he gradually came to the conclusion that Mrs. Standridge might be right in many points; he felt compelled to admit that the epithet "judicious" did apply to his cousin Laura, though in no derogatory sense; he began, also, to suspect that it might be true she had never loved him "really," and to hope that his love for her was not of the incurable type. Of course he should never forget her; but now that her unquestioned wisdom had placed her beyond his reach, he felt a certain comfort in the reflection that she had always been to him less a woman than a goddess, and as a goddess he might still adore her.

When Kenric had reached this point, which was not until some days had passed, he was ready to forgive Mrs. Standridge for her judgment of his cousin, but he was still resentful of her views regarding Penny Lancaster. He thought it unpardonable that any friend of his should ignore the claim he had established upon this young girl's regard. He was not in love with Penny, he had never thought of such a thing, but he was so much her friend that it vexed him intolerably to have her appropriated to Dr. Griffith. He repudiated indignantly the suggestion that Penny might fall in love with himself, for he took great pride in the reflection that his bearing towards her had been such as to forbid any folly of the kind; but Penny was his friend, and he had no intention of denying himself the consolations of friendship. To Penny, therefore, he turned now, for sympathy.

It was about a week after his interview with Mrs. Standridge that he brought the evening lessons abruptly to an end by closing the books in the midst of a reading, saying that he wished to tell her something concerning himself.

The girl was so startled that she did not answer; for Kenric hitherto, had confined his conversation strictly to the subject of her studies. She stared at him with dismayed eyes, for she thought that he meant to tell her he was tired of teaching her.

But Kenric, full of his own thoughts, hardly noticed

her look of anxious surprise. "Has it ever occurred to you, Penny," said he, that you don't know anything about me? That for aught you know, I may be a fugitive from justice?"

"Are you a fugitive from justice?" said Penny. Apparently it did not make the least difference to her if he were; and Kenric could not satisfy himself whether he should regard this state of mind as complimentary, or the reverse.

"No," he answered, "I call myself a fugitive from injustice."

"Oh" exclaimed Penny, indignant sympathy in her voice and eyes. "Was your uncle unjust to you?"

"My uncle?" repeated Kenric, in surprise. "What do you know of my uncle?"

"Mrs. Standridge told me."

"Told you—*when*?"

"That time I went there when Nan was hurt. I didn't ask her."

"And did she tell you about—about a girl I had loved?"

"No," said Penny, with averted eyes; "never a word."

"Well, there *was* a girl I loved," Kenric informed her.

"And don't you love her still?" ventured Penny, shyly.

"I don't know," said Kenric, with a mirthless laugh. "I've given her up."

"Did she love you?"

"In a manner, perhaps; yes."

"I don't believe you have given her up," said Penny, after a pause, in which she seemed to have carefully considered the case. "You haven't given her up in your heart, you know," she added, impulsively, with heightened color.

"Judge!" exclaimed Kenric. "She wrote me a letter the other day, to tell me that she is married to a man twice her age, and very rich. She has thrown me over."

Penny's face had grown as white as ashes, in which her eyes burned with a baleful fire. "Then may she come to want and die in misery!" said she, with emphasis, as she struck her hands together.

“Oh! hush! hush!” cried Kenric. “You do not know her.”

“No; nor I don’t want to know her,” said Penny, stoutly. “Nor her name, neither. I shall hate her all my days, and I don’t want to hate her by name;” and then she hastily quitted the room, leaving Kenric half-dismayed, yet not displeased. Penny had said no more than a sister might have said, but a sister would not have gone away from him in that sudden manner.

Before he saw Penny again, the next day’s mail brought Kenric a letter from Miss Fish, and Miss Fish’s letter was the little spark that kindled a sudden flame in Kenric’s heart.

Miss Fish had learned his address from his cousin, of whose marriage she wrote in terms of so strong approbation, that it was plain she too thought Kenric’s goddess “judicious.” She gave the young man to understand, further, that unless he speedily returned there was danger of his uncle’s transferring his favor to some more distant relative.

This letter, Kenric tore to pieces for the wind to scatter about the streets of little Warrenton. “I am not to be managed by Miss Fish,” he said. “I am a man, and I choose to be independent. I can carve my own fortune, and I will not purchase my uncle’s countenance and support by an abject surrender.”

In this state of defiance, his heart turned at once to Penny with a sense of security that gave him a feeling akin to joy. *She* was no goddess upon a pedestal, but a woman, with a woman’s tender and devoted nature, and the thought that she might love him was no longer to be indignantly rejected; he rejoiced to believe that she did love him, and that he might build with certainty upon that love for his future happiness and prosperity. Removed from amid the sordid surroundings by which her native disposition had been cramped and blighted, he argued that Penny would develop into a woman of whom any man might be proud; and here, for once, he remembered the blood of the Donalds without any disposition to smile. Marriage, in his present condition was out of the question, but he argued that he could make his way all the better, and all the more quickly

if such a girl as Penny were willing to wait until he could have a home ready for her.

It so happened—as if a kindly fate would give this rash young wooer time to consider—that Kenric was called away at this time on some business relating to the mill, but his purpose became only the more fixed in the two weeks thus vouchsafed him for reflection. The very afternoon of the day on which he returned, seeing Penny walking along the dusty street that led towards the wood skirting the town, he hastened after her, in full sight of the gossiping crowd assembled around the corner drug-store, and supremely indifferent to whatever comments his course might give rise to—for this was the first time that Kenric had paid Penny the compliment of any public attention.

As for Penny, she was surprised, indeed, but not at all embarrassed. She smiled at him from under her sun-bonnet, and told him that she was going to the Spring. “Haven’t you ever been there?” she asked, with eager interest.

Kenric had never been there.

“Oh, then you just ought to see it!” she exclaimed with enthusiasm. “Such a pretty place!”

“Why do you go alone?” Kenric felt impelled to ask.

“I ain’t afraid,” laughed Penny; “and it’s not so far.”

“No; but I should think you would find companions among the other girls?” said Kenric, as it occurred to him, for the first time, and not without a sense of satisfaction, that Penny seemed to have no friendships.

“Oh,” said Penny, with a touch of scorn, “other girls like to walk the streets; I like the woods.”

“You wouldn’t be willing to live in the city, then?” Kenric asked, with some anxiety.

“Never!” Penny answered with brief decision that pleased Kenric; he had always admired the promptitude of her opinions.

They walked on in silence until they ascended a little slope and came in sight of Penny’s beloved spring, across a depression that little Warrenton dignified with the name of ravine: here Penny pulled off her bonnet, and exclaimed, “Look!” with a ring of irrepressible admiration in her voice.

Kenric looked about him with distinct approval : if he could not share Penny's enthusiasm, he could at least enjoy it ; and the little dell that called it forth presented just then a spectacle that had for him the attraction of novelty. Down by the pool formed by the spring's overflow, in the shadow of a spreading oak, a group of negro women were washing clothes. They had a great array of tubs, and an immense iron pot, the largest Kenric had ever seen, under which was a fire, and scattered here and there were several primitive wooden benches, formed by driving stout pegs into a circular block, with the bark of the tree from which it was cut still surrounding it. At one of these benches a woman with a heavy paddle was vigorously pounding a shapeless mass that she lifted and turned from time to time. The air resounded with the blows of the beetle, mingling with loud talking and bursts of laughter, athwart which floated the sonorous hymn of an older woman, who stood at a tub, apart from the rest, and sang to a wild, monotonous, but thrilling chant :

“ Oh, chillun, de chay'ot's a-rollin',
A-rolling' ter de campin' groun'.”

“ They're *battling* clothes,” said Penny, in brief explanation to the look of inquiry Kenric turned upon her. “ Don't you call this a heavenly spot ? ”

“ Yes,” said Kenric, amiably ; “ running water, and flickering shadows, and nodding ferns ; it's all very well in its way ; but—it's rather a small way, Penny.”

“ I've never seen any greater,” said Penny, with a sort of sad resentment.

“ But you may, some day ; I am sure of it ! ” Kenric declared.

Penny smiled, but shook her head. “ Wouldn't you like a drink of water ? ” she asked suddenly ; and without waiting for an answer, she darted down the slope.

Kenric expected that she would go over to the washerwomen and borrow a cup, but Penny having reached the bottom of the slope, ran up the opposite side, near the spring, and catching at a pendant magnolia bough, broke off a branch.

“ Come down ! ” she cried, waving it at him. “ These make first-rate drinking cups, only they must be used on the spot.”

Kenric, upon this invitation, went over to the spring, and stood watching her while she gave a dexterous twist to one of the broad, stiff leaves, and shaped it into a little three-cornered vessel. "There," said she; "fill that, and drink."

"Fill it yourself," said Kenric, lazily. He was too well pleased with the pretty picture she made to wish to spoil it. "Fill it yourself, and hand it to me."

Penny glanced at him in slight surprise, but she obeyed his behest without a shadow of embarrassment. She had no coquetry, no self-consciousness, and Kenric, as he watched her, enjoyed, for the first time, a thrill of genuine, heart-felt admiration. He drank of the first cup, and demanded another and another: the performance had an idyllic charm that took his fancy captive, and he feigned thirst in order to prolong his pleasure. But when the nymph of the fountain had twisted and filled some half dozen cups for his benefit, he said to himself that it was time this pretty play should stop, if he would use this opportunity of speaking to Penny concerning what now filled his heart. Had Penny been a young lady of society, he would have put the last leaf in his pocket with an ostentation of sentiment, but with this straightforward girl he could lend himself to no pretence. He threw the leaf away, saying as carelessly as he could:

"Penny, have you happened to think that this is the first time I ever took a walk with you, good friends though we be?"

"I suppose you had something better to do," said Penny, with a matter-of-fact simplicity that made Kenric smile.

"I had a reason for coming here to-day," he said. "There is something I must tell you."

She looked a little troubled, but she showed no embarrassment. "Suppose we go over there in the shade," she said. "The roots of that oak will be a good seat."

Kenric assented, not a little vexed to find himself disconcerted by Penny's self-possession.

When they were seated, he put the question abruptly:

"Penny, if you were a young man with your way to make in the world, what would you do?"

"*Me ?* I'd have a farm!" said Penny, without an instant's hesitation.

"A plantation, you mean? And turn slave-driver?" answered Kenric, with something of a sneer.

"I wouldn't be mean to my niggers, if I had 'em," answered Penny, serenely. "But I ain't talking about a plantation; it's a farm like what I've heard my uncle Joe tell of that I want to manage. Where you don't have more land than you can handle, and where you ain't bothered with cotton, but can take your time, raising everything you need at home, and just enjoy seeing things grow."

"Do you think you could be happy to spend your life, your whole life, in that way?" Kenric asked, doubtfully.

"Happy? It would be Heaven! But there is no use wishing." And Penny sighed, profoundly.

"I don't know," said Kenric, "life has so much in store for one as young as you; you might marry a farmer—"

"I don't want to come by my farm that way," said Penny, stoutly. "And I'm just goin' on eighteen," she added, rather inconsequently.

"But if you loved some one very much—eighteen isn't too young," said Kenric, stammering as he approached the vital question.

"No," said Penny, evidently considering the point abstractedly: "Heneretta was married when she was sixteen. But *she* ran away."

"*You* wouldn't run away, Penny?"

"Yes, I would; if I saw cause," was the astounding answer, calmly delivered.

"I—I—wouldn't ask you to run away, Penny," Kenric stammered, in dire confusion.

"I know that," replied Penny, with serene confidence, as she turned her calm eyes upon Kenric's perturbed countenance.

"But I would ask you to wait until I could give you a home of your own," said Kenric.

Penny heard him without a tremor or a blush, but her eyes took on an expression of infinite pity. She was thinking of the girl who had not chosen to wait for him.

"Great Heaven, Penny!" he burst forth. "*Don't* you understand? Would you be willing to marry me—when I can offer you a home?"

She did not turn away in blushing confusion; a look of wondering fear, of incredulity, almost of anger, came into her eyes, which remained fixed upon his, as she drew away her hands, which he would have taken, and clasped them lightly above her heart.

"No, no," she said, hoarsely.

"Dear, dear Penny!"

"I tell you, no?" cried Penny. "Oh, Mr. Kenric, how can you—how can you put such a jest upon me?"

"Penny, Penny, I swear to you it is no jest. I love you indeed"—and he spoke the truth; at that moment he loved her wildly. "I never loved any one as I love you; I believe now that I must have loved you all along—how else could I have been content here? I have thought of nothing else all the while I was away. Penny, Penny, what have you to say to me? Will you marry me one of these days?"

"No," said Penny, and turned her face away.

"Won't you think of it, Penny?" Kenric entreated.

"No," said Penny, again, inexorably.

"Don't you love me even a little?" he demanded half angrily.

"No," said Penny.

"What is the matter?" Kenric exclaimed, exasperated.

"I don't love you, I never shall!" Penny declared, resolutely. "Oh, I wish, I wish you never, never had said this to me!"

"Don't you believe me?" said Kenric.

Penny was silent.

"Don't you believe me?" Kenric reiterated.

"Oh, let us go home!" cried Penny, piteously. "And forget—forget—" She rose and walked hurriedly towards the path.

"One word more!" exclaimed Kenric, striding after her. "You love some one else?"

"*Me, love?*" said Penny, with fine scorn.

"Dr. Griffith?" suggested Kenric, in a jealous rage.

Penny replied by an indignant look that spoke volumes of denial.

"Tell me this, then !" cried Kenric, with savage impetuosity, as he remembered the reputation her sisters had for seeking wealthy husbands. "Would you marry me if I had money?"

"No," said Penny.

Kenric looked at her, and saw that her face was pale and her hands trembling ; but she wore a resolute air.

"You are not even sorry," he sighed.

"Oh, I am ! I am !" Penny answered, almost with a sob. "Let us go home, and forget—forget—"

The washer-women had already completed their day's labor, and were toiling up the little slope in single file, poising their loaded tubs upon their heads, and followed by a little rabble of negro children with dinner-buckets and wash-boards. The sun was low in the west and through the woods the cows of Little Warrenton, lean and scraggy, and tinkling discordant bells were straggling home.

Kenric felt oppressed with a supreme sadness ; a homesickness more intense than he had ever known weighed upon him. He had felt so secure of his hold upon Penny's heart, so utterly unprepared to hear her say *no*, and persist in it, that his confidence in himself now suddenly gave way : his resolute will seemed to forsake him, and all the future looked a blank. One question repeated itself in his brain, continuously : How was he to live on in Little Warrenton deprived of his interest in Penny ?

The harsh clamor of the tavern bell, ringing for supper, as the evening meal was called, though served at dusk, made itself heard as these two came in silence up the dusty street.

When they came to the piazza steps, Penny spoke. "We won't have any lessons to-night," she said, without a tremor ; but there was in her voice a tone of dismissal that did not escape Kenric's sensitive ear.

"It is the beginning of the end," he thought, bitterly, but he only bowed and smiled, and said ; "At your pleasure."

CHAPTER VII.

THE VISION OF THE WORLD.

It did not escape Dr. Griffith's notice that Kenric had accompanied Penny in her woodland walk, and the discovery that the lessons were to be omitted that evening was rather a perplexity than a consolation. Could he but have found Penny, he would willingly have neglected his patients for the sake of learning something of the state of affairs between herself and Kenric; but Penny was nowhere to be seen. Mrs. Lancaster, when inquired of, gave it as her opinion that Penny had retired to the private apartments dedicated to the Misses Lancaster.

"She's one o' the Donalds, you know," said the step-mother, sourly; "an' sooner or later the family taste is boun' to show itself. Penny has mostly took to the woods; but maybe she begins to count herself a young lady now that Miss Arabella has got engaged, though it's a long-lingering engagement, 'cordin' to my notions."

But Penny had not sought the privacy of that little parlor upstairs, to which in common with her sisters she had a right, though she never claimed it: Penny was at the farthest end of the weed-grown garden, industriously re-potting her geraniums by the light of the stars, and the tears were streaming unheeded down her cheeks.

Dr. Griffith had to content himself with scowling at Kenric, which Kenric was too self-absorbed to see.

Within the next few days, this "braw wooer" realized more keenly than he would have thought possible, that life in Little Warrenton was no longer worth the living. He went about his duties at the mill in a perfunctory, mechanical fashion, and sedulously avoided Mrs. Standridge and her friends. His thoughts were persistently busy with the question whether or not he should offer to resume the lessons with Penny. The more Kenric thought of it, the more was he persuaded that a young

man with his way to make in the world, could wish no better helpmeet than Penny Lancaster. And despite the insistency of her denial, his vanity counselled him that Penny could not but love him. He decided, at last, after a debate of ten days or more, that the lessons must go on, if only to prevent impertinent comment and inquiry.

Kenric was tilted back in a splint-bottomed chair against the China-tree that shaded the sidewalk, when he came to this decision. It was late in the afternoon, an idle hour with the town usually, but he had been left to meditate undisturbed, for the post-office was now the attraction, and there the crowd began to thicken as the long-drawn notes of a bugle announced the advent of the mail that three times a week wrought a sub-acute excitement in the town of Little Warrenton. The old hound on the end of the tavern piazza set up his accustomed sympathetic howl; the Lancaster boys ceased their game of marbles and gathered on the steps; old Archie came out with a hospitable smile, hopeful of guests, but prepared by long experience for disappointment; Mrs. Lancaster, hiding the defects of her untidy dress with a ragged silk scarf, lounged in the doorway, behind a half-grown negro girl, who bore the youngest, wide-eyed scion of the House of Lancaster in her arms; and all stood peering down the street, where presently, in a cloud of yellow dust, the clumsy coach, drawn by four bony horses, rattled past the tavern to the post-office. The rusty mail-bag—there was but one—was tossed out by the driver with a practiced dexterity, and caught by the post-master with an air of importance that custom could not stale. The coach then disappeared around the corner, to the stables, to return in the course of a lingering half-hour, with fresh horses; the post-master brought out the rusty bag, he and the driver went through the ceremony of toss and catch, the whip was cracked, the horses sprang forward, the old hound howled again—and Little Warrenton's tri-weekly pageant was over.

Kenric had witnessed this scene repeatedly and always with impatient wonder at the unvarying interest it excited. To him nothing made the dull place seem so petty, so remote, so aimless, as this slight contact with

the outer world. Listlessly he sat watching the cloud of dust in which the coach disappeared on its way to the Florida border, and wondered, with a home-sick weariness when he should shake off the dust of Little Warrenton and roll away triumphantly in the rays of the setting sun; and then he smiled as he remembered that he would depart in no glory of the sun-set, but in the dim, gray dawn, with the coach that went northward—some day. For surely, he thought, whether or not he married Penny, it was never written that he should waste his life in Little Warrenton.

“You don’t appear to be expectin’ nothin’ by this mail?” said the druggist’s clerk, as he handed Kenric a letter in passing.

“Thank you; no, I don’t think I was expecting a letter,” Kenric replied, glancing in some surprise at the unknown handwriting of the address.

His surprise increased when upon opening the envelope he found a check for a larger sum of money than he had seen since he took his independent course. The words accompanying the check were few indeed, but Kenric turned pale as he read, and sank back in his chair. With what tumult of heart and brain did he read and re-read those brief, decided words summoning him away! He lifted his head and looked around; all Little Warrenton was transfigured in his eyes, and in that instant Penny was forgotten! He rose impetuously, and walked with hurried strides towards the tavern.

“Kenric has got news that seems to kinder stagger him to tote it,” remarked the druggist’s clerk to Dr. Griffith, lingering near the piazza-steps.

The Doctor expressed his feelings by a growl.

Kenric, unconscious of the Doctor’s presence, went up the steps, and then he turned and looked up and down the street, and across to the Court-house square, and the drug-store on the corner with its ambitious oversized mortar and pestle, and its huge green bottles in the dingy window. There was a look in his face that appealed irresistibly to Dr. Griffith’s sympathy.

“Hello, Kenric? No bad news, I hope?” said he.

Kenric came back to earth with a start. “Both bad and good,” he answered, with a faint smile. “I shall leave Little Warrenton by to-morrow’s stage.”

The Doctor straightened himself up as if he had received a blow.

"I think it is time," he said, gravely.

And then Kenric remembered that his escape from the irksomeness of Little Warrenton meant farewell to Penny; a moment before he had been full of a wild triumph of joy that he was looking upon this stagnant, aimless, hopeless spot for the last time by the light of day; he had deliberately surveyed his surroundings, lingering over each wearisomely familiar detail to exult in the thought that never again should his eyes rest on all this array of commonplace; but the thought of Penny gave him pause. Perhaps Dr. Griffith was right; *it was time that he should go*. When Penny said No, he had been indignant, angry, and sorely wounded; but now, strange contradiction of the human heart! the sudden widening of his horizon dwarfed the tavern girl's attractions; he was no longer the young man with his way to make in the world, but once again the acknowledged heir to a great fortune, of which he must come into possession at no distant day. If Penny had said Yes, he would have abided by that word; but she said No, and he felt that he had made an escape, though he almost despised himself for thinking so, even while he rejoiced.

"I say it is time," repeated the Doctor, annoyed, and suspicious at Kenric's silence.

"I understand you, Doctor," Kenric returned, lightly.

"Still harping on my daughter."

"Pish!" said the Doctor. "She's *not* my daughter; if she were— But I'd give you to remember I'm not so old as I seem." And he was moving angrily away, when Kenric, with extended hand cried to him:

"Stay, Dr. Griffith; let me bid you good-bye. I may not see you again; and in parting let me tell you that I shall always be Penny's friend, but you will be more some day—"

"Nonsense," interrupted the Doctor, fidgetting, but evidently pleased. "Why do you say that?"

"I am gifted with the power of vaticination on the eve of my departure. I read the future that shall be. Good-bye, Doctor, I've always liked you, though you haven't always liked me." And Kenric passed into the

dingy parlor where, as the lamp was already lighted, he hoped to find Penny.

"Confound him! Yes, I've always liked *him*," muttered Dr. Griffith. "Even when I haven't wanted to. That is what worried me on the girl's account. Glad he's going."

When Penny entered the dimly lighted parlor, and found Kenric sitting in deep thought beside the table with his head on his hand, she thought he was ill.

"You've gone and got the fever again, Mr. Kenric!" she said, with a tremor in her voice. "Let me send for Dr. Griffith?"

"No, Penny; it's not the fever; I've had—news."

"Bad news?" queried Penny, in a hushed voice.

"My uncle has sent for me," replied Kenric, reluctantly. Penny had said No, and yet he dreaded the effect this information might have upon her.

"And you must go to him—right away," said she promptly. It was an assertion, not an inquiry, and Kenric felt a little hurt.

"I did not think you would be so ready—so *eager* to speed my departure, Penny," he said, reproachfully.

"It is because I wish you well," she returned, in a low voice. "Must you go to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow. Fortunately, it is the regular stage day. My uncle is ill; too ill to write himself. He dictated his letter to his man of business; and my great fear is that I may be too late to see him again."

"It is a pity you ever left him," said Penny.

"Do you think so, Penny?" he hazarded, rashly.

"Let me go do your packing," said Penny, apparently unmoved. She had made him her especial charge for so long that it did not occur to her he could pack for himself.

"You are very good," said Kenric. "Time presses, you know; and if you will just throw my things together, I'll run round and say good-bye to Mrs. Standridge."

Mrs. Standridge was frankly glad that he was going, "glad on every possible account," she said.

"Well," returned Kenric, "I forgive you."

"And Penny?"

"Penny?" said Kenric, in resentful memory of

Penny's self-possession. "Penny is all right; she'll marry Dr. Griffith one of these days."

"Why do you say that?"

"To please you."

"I am glad you are going away," said Mrs. Standridge again.

And Kenric, having taken leave of her, returned to the tavern, where he found the whole Lancaster family assembled to bid him good-bye. Even Miss Arabella and Mrs. Lyndham descended from the seclusion of their private apartments to meet him in the tavern parlor.

One and all, they were so sorry he was going, so eager to know when he would return—for each and all cherished the belief that some day he would return to claim Penny.

"But where is Penny?" Kenric asked, when he had shaken hands all around.

Nobody could answer; search failed to reveal her, and Kenric retired, convinced that she did not intend to say good-bye to him.

But it was Penny, faithful Penny, that called him in the gray dawn; and when he went down stairs, Penny was by the door in the dingy hall, where a flickering, smoky lamp made darkness visible. Kenric saw that she had a cup in one hand and a coffee-pot in the other.

"You must drink this," she said. "I made it. It's better than you'll get in the dining-room."

Kenric took the cup. "Oh, Penny," he said,—and his voice shook—"what a good, kind girl you are!" And yet how glad he was she had said No!

"Drink it," said Penny, peremptorily; and Kenric obeyed.

When he had swallowed the coffee, she set the cup and the coffee-pot on the floor, and looked at him with a mute distress that went nigh to make havoc with his prudence. "Penny," he faltered, and would have taken her hand; but Penny, who thought he meant to say good-bye, drew back.

"Not yet," she said, with pathetic emphasis; "it is not *yet* quite time."

Kenric shivered. What if, after all, Penny loved him? But she had said No.

"I suppose," said Penny, recovering her matter-of-fact manner, "that you will be very rich? As rich as Mrs. Perry Standridge!"

"I shall be rich enough," said Kenric. He did not tell her that compared with his wealth, Mrs. Perry Standridge's modest means might be counted poverty.

"Rich enough to travel?" asked Penny. "To cross the ocean—Europe—" she ended with a gasp, realizing dimly the vast distance that was beginning already to stretch between herself and Kenric.

The young man nodded, his own heart too full for speech, not because he perceived the girl's agitation, but because the great world seemed suddenly opening wide before him; and the joy of anticipated travel choked his utterance.

"Well, I am glad!" cried Penny bravely, her cheeks aglow, and her eyes full of fire. "*You won't hanker after that girl.*"

Kenric winced. This was a speech that puzzled him exceedingly and made him decidedly glad that he was going away. He left her abruptly and went to the door: it seemed to him that the stage was very long in coming.

"Yes," said Penny, with feeling, "I am glad for your good fortune, even though I should never see you again!"

Kenric came back and sat down beside her, and just then the stage rattled up to the door.

Penny sprang to her feet. "Good-bye!" she said, hurriedly: she was eager to have the parting over.

Kenric took both her hands.

"Penny," he said, and his voice shook, "I shall never forget—I might have died here, but for you. I make no promises, because as yet nothing is defined in my future, but I do not mean to cease to be your friend. Good-bye, and God bless you!" And before he was himself aware of what he would do, he bent down and kissed her.

"Come now, Mr. Kenric! Ready sir?" old Archie was shouting from without.

"Oh, I shall miss you!" Penny sighed, clasping her

hands fervently as Kenric released them ; but she said this brightly, and she shed no tear. She had always known that some day she and this friend must part ; into her reasonable mind the thought of marrying Morrison Kenric had never entered. Yet she could not bear to witness the departure of the stage, and as she turned away from the door, she pulled her shawl over her head to shut out the sound of the wheels ; and Kenric who saw this, thought she was cold and sleepy, and he sank back, the solitary passenger in the swaying coach, not a little comforted by the girl's matter-of-fact acceptance of circumstances.

Penny was cold indeed, with a strange chill at her heart, but sleepy she was not. Her first thought was to go to Kenric's deserted room, and appropriate some memento of him, if, perchance, any possession of his had been left behind. She had packed his trunk herself, but now she remembered that she had neglected to look into a small box-closet on the side of the chimney, where she had put his medicines when he was ill. He had defiantly thrown out every vial and every pill-box, the first day he went down-stairs, but Penny, thrusting her hand into the farthest corner, came in contact with a clumsy pint bottle, the seal unbroken. It contained brandy, forgotten after that long attack of fever. Penny took it away and hid it in her own room.

CHAPTER VIII.

LITTLE WARRENTON NO MORE !

PENNY had spoken truly when she said she should miss her friend ; she missed him even more than she had supposed she should. Such education as he had given her removed her, in a measure, from companionship with her family, and yet, lacking the stimulus of Kenric's instruction, she lost interest in study. A cruel sense of isolation took possession of her ; day by day she felt more keenly the aimlessness and hopelessness of her existence, and many a time, lying awake through the still watches of the night, when she saw, as in a

vision, the blank and barren years of a long future, would she wring her hands and cry out in anguish, "Oh, that I were a man to shape my own life!"

As days and weeks went by, and there came no news from Kenric, her family attributed her restlessness and depression to disappointment; but disappointment had very little to do with her state of mind. She was not looking for a letter from Kenric: why should a man to whom the vast world was opening its portals, take thought of so infinitesimal a corner as Little Warrenton? It was the keen need of definite occupation that beset her; for Penny was no longer a child, and her practical spirit refused any more to find permanent gratification in futile wandering through the woods and fields. The creative faculty, always a marked trait in strong characters, argued her to be up and doing; and Penny, following the bent of her genius, fell to work upon the garden, to the great scandal of her step-mother, who having fixed it in her own mind that Kenric must return some day to marry the girl he had befriended, was sorely vexed that she should "tan up her skin and rough her hands."

"Why she can't nuss up her complexion like Arabella and Heneretta, I dunno," complained Mrs. Lancaster. "She's got no right toe pizen her prawspects, when here's her family to profit by her luck. The boys is Lancasters, if they ain't Donalds."

But as time went on, this ambitious mother of the Lancaster boys began to lose faith in Penny's luck; the girl hadn't the "management" that distinguished her sisters, Mrs. Lancaster thought, or she would have made sure of "that Yankee." For November came, but brought no news of Kenric, and Mrs. Lancaster's soul grew bitter. It seemed intolerably hard that her boys should have to forego the advantage that ought to accrue to them from their sister's marriage with such a man as Kenric. She felt that her children had been, in a certain sense, defrauded, and that Penny was to blame. But she nursed her wrath and indignation a long time before giving expression to it, contenting herself with opposing everything this disappointing step-daughter did or essayed to do.

Penny, with broad and solemn views of duty and

responsibility, would fain have striven to bestow some useful training on those rough young cubs, the sons of her querulous step-mother ; but Mrs. Lancaster was a jealous parent ; she would brook no influence over her children that was not in harmony with her own, and in no long time she had created in the boys a spirit of defiance towards their half-sister that forced her to abandon all effort for their improvement. And yet Mrs. Lancaster was a most religious woman, loving long prayers and longer sermons, and doleful hymns, a firm believer in the power of the Devil.

In this faith had Penny, too, grown up ; a religion of threats that annihilated all trust, and placed her at an immense distance from her Creator. When she saw herself baffled in all her efforts to make something of her barren life in the home where Providence had placed her, she knew not where to turn for solace and strength. She felt herself enveloped in a great darkness, and grope as she might, no ray of light cheered the desperate gloom.

One friend she had who was penetrated by the keenest sympathy for her. Dr. Griffith, without in the least comprehending her, saw and understood much of the discomfort of her position. He had studied Penny with a jealous watchfulness ever since Kenric's departure, and from believing in bitterness of soul that she was breaking her heart for the faithless Yankee, he had succeeded in persuading himself that she had forgotten Kenric as completely as Kenric had forgotten her. Under this persuasion he allowed himself to hope that Penny could be induced to look upon himself with favor. He was very much in love with her, and for that very reason, immeasurably afraid of her. He had, therefore, the unwisdom to open his heart to old Archie, and old Archie, as in prudence bound, laid the case before Mrs. Lancaster.

This was a few days before Christmas, and as nothing had yet been heard from Kenric, Mrs. Lancaster was decidedly of the opinion that he "had given Penny the everlasting go-by." Her surprise and satisfaction, when she heard that Dr. Griffith wished to marry Penny were unbounded.

"My Lawd!" she exclaimed. "A fool for luck, to

be sure ! Who'd have expected the like for Penny ? She ain't got one grain o' common-sense, that girl ain't. It would be just like her to turn up her nose at Dr. Griffith, and there's Heneretta would take him at the drop of a hat. I dunno what sort o' stuff Penny's made out of ; but it's *your* duty as a *payrent*, Mr. Langster toe cawmpel that hard-headed girl to listen to reason—onless you want her onto your hands an everlastin' ole maid."

But Penny took a different view of the case. She declared that she would not marry Dr. Griffith ; and neither her step-mother's vituperation, nor the remonstrances of her sisters availed to move her.

Miss Arabella, being the eldest sister, and looking forward to her own marriage in the near future, considered herself competent to give sage counsel, and her advice was that Dr. Griffith should himself speak to Penny. "You never should have gone to pa," she said to him." But it isn't too late yet, in my opinion."

As a drowning man snatches at straws, so Dr. Griffith snatched at the hope held out in this hint. He sought a personal interview with Penny, in which, with a humility and a self-distrust most touching, he declared his inalienable love for her.

It is sad to relate that Penny could not appreciate this good man's tenderness and fidelity. She hated his uncouth homeliness, and she could not understand how a man almost old enough to be her father could wish to marry her ; moreover she was very angry with Dr. Griffith because his offer of marriage had subjected her to unmitigated condemnation.

"No ; I don't love you," said hard-hearted Penny. "And I am not golng to marry you, I don't care what they all say. It is just mean and horrid of you to set 'em all against me this way. And if I get sick I shan't take your old physic, and I hope I may die, just to spite you."

But it was Kenric, not Penny, who came in for the Doctor's wrath.

"It's that unutterable Yankee," he said to old Archie, when he reported Penny's discouraging speech.

Mrs. Lancaster thought so too, in the bitterness of her heart, and Penny's rude young brothers taunted her

when the mail came in. "Aha, Miss Pen!" they cried, thrusting out their tongues, wagging their heads and rolling their eyes. "Mr. High-and-Mighty thinks no mo' of you than of any piney-woods gopher he might ha, cotched and tamed."

"And why should he?" retorted Penny, irately. "Anybody may see that he is of different clay."

"And you a Donald!" shrieked her sisters.

"I don't care!"

"If there's anythin' on this earth more despisable in my sight than any other thin'," said Mrs. Lancaster, solemnly, "it is stuck up furrin trash."

"He isn't a foreigner!" gasped Penny, infuriated.

"I say he is; and don't you answer me back. His ways wasn't like our ways, an' if that's not bein' a fur-riner, it comes toe the same thin'. Much good has he done us, makin' Penny so up-lifted."

"That's so, Penny," her father mildly assented. "You'd better forget him."

"I will never forget him while I live!" Penny declared. "I never expect to see him again, I never expect to hear from him. I understand, if none of you do, that he belongs to a different sphere."

"Speer?" repeated Mrs. Lancaster, contemptuously. "Don't you let me hear no more of no '*speer*'!"

But Penny's sisters, rich in experience, refused to give literal acceptance to Penny's utterances about Kenric. "She is dealing in evasions!" they declared, and feeling that they had a right to know the truth, they questioned her closely.

"Penny," said Miss Arabella, "come now, make honest confession: did Mr. Kenric ever say anything to make you think him in love with you?"

Penny remained obstinately silent, but her tell-tale face converted suspicion to certainty.

"And you let him slip through your fingers, you miserable little goose!" exclaimed Mrs. Lyndham. "I could shake you out of your shoes! You are not worthy to be a Donald. You deserve nothing better than to hang on at this tavern all your days. A girl with so little ambition."

"I tell you," cried Penny, angrily, "I know my own

affairs. I wouldn't marry Mr. Kenric if he asked me, so there, now !”

“Neither Dr. Griffith nor Mr. Kenric !” said her sister. “You will repent your fastidiousness, one of these days.”

The constant repetition of such taunts irritated Penny inexpressibly. As for Kenric's love-making, she had put that out of her thoughts, but the memory of Kenric's friendship was her one sacred possession, and she could not endure to have others meddle with it. Why could they not keep silent about his silence? *She* could be content to let him pass out of her life, leaving only that pleasant memory of an ended friendship.

So thought Penny in all honesty : nevertheless, as Christmas drew near, her heart sank with the two-fold burden of the recollection of the Christmas a year ago which his kindness made glad, and the certainty that no memento from him would brighten this Christmas for her. She did not complain because he consigned her to oblivion, but she felt it to be intolerable that because she was consigned to oblivion, she should have to hear the reproaches of her sisters, the jeers of her brothers, and the taunts of the step-mother who had always held her cheap. Dr. Griffith had interfered—so Penny regarded the course he had taken—to complicate matters, and add to her distress : why should they all be so bent upon her marrying Dr. Griffith? Ever since the day he had spoken to her father, she had endured persecution ; but of one thing she was sure—she would not marry Dr. Griffith.

So Penny went to bed on Christmas Eve, full of bitterness against her fate. She hated the coming day ; she almost wished she might die ; it was certain no one would miss her, she thought, for, alas ! Dr. Griffith had failed to inspire her with any faith in his attachment. She had nothing, nothing to look forward to, not even the pleasure of the day. She sat up in the darkness, clasping her knees and moaning in anguish of spirit.

Her sisters in the next room, who were expecting to dine on the morrow with a large company at Mrs. Perry Standridge's, called to her, crossly ; “For mercy's sake, don't keep up such a fuss !”

Penny slipped out of bed and shut the door between

them, and lay down again with a sense of utter desolation. In that one little act she seemed to have cut herself off from her sisters forever. "Oh, that I were a man!" she sighed to herself. "If I *were* a man, I could not be less a woman to my sisters than I am."

Thus in the dead midnight, the thought came to her to go forth and push her own way. It was a bold thought for a Southern girl in those days, and it made her spring up wildly in her bed and gasp for breath, as though she had been suddenly plunged into a keener, freer atmosphere. It made her tremble in every fibre, not with the coward's tremor, but with the sympathetic vibration of a dauntless spirit, brought suddenly face to face with a high emprise.

"I will take my life in my hands and *go!*" she whispered to herself, with a wild sense of freedom that seemed to lend her wings. She did not debate the question an instant; the resolve came with the thought; for to this end, unconsciously to Penny, had all the midnight throes of her cogitations tended.

In the first gray glimmer of the dawn, she rose, tied her scant possessions into a bundle, the heart of which was that bottle of French brandy with the seal unbroken; little dreamed she then for what end she cherished this memento of her vanished friend with almost superstitious care.

With this bundle in her arms and an old shawl drawn around her shoulders, she crept in her stockings, through the dark and narrow tavern passages, and down the stairs, and crossed the threshold of her father's house for the last time. On the piazza steps she sat down and put on her shoes, and then passed out into the world to seek her fortune.

Penny was but eighteen, and in her inexperience she did not perceive that she was taking an irrevocable step, that she was, in effect, separating herself from her family forever. This departure without leave-taking gave her no pang of heart or conscience, for the thought that she might never see her father or her sisters again did not once present itself amid the rush and tumult of overpowering emotions that possessed her from the moment the idea of flight suggested itself. Strong as was her desire to test her own powers in the struggle of

life, the horizon of her hopes was as yet so very limited that Penny could not feel herself severed from her father's household. She had, indeed, a definite goal in view when she left Lancaster's Tavern, in the glimmering dawn of that Christmas morning, but it was only twenty miles away, at the Cross-roads store, kept by her uncle Joe. To Penny this Cross-roads store seemed a specific part of the great world; for with the exception of two or three short visits to her uncle in her childhood, she had never been farther than a mile away from her home in all the eighteen years of her life; and it almost seemed to her, now, as she left the little town behind her, that she was passing into another planet. But there was no weight of regret upon her spirits; she ran, not because she feared pursuit, but because all her energies seemed to urge her forward to meet that new and fuller life beckoning to her.

It was a lonely road she had to travel, through a vast, level tract of pine forest, not a settlement of any kind, not even a cabin along the entire route; but Penny was not afraid; she was shy, but she was no coward, and she had a large faith in the simple folk of that primitive region.

Fortunately, the day was mild and bright, and Penny, in her excited state, was long unconscious of hunger or fatigue; but she must have abandoned all hope of arriving at her uncle's before dark, had she not been overtaken, about noon, by a man with an ox-cart. She saw him from a distance, winding his way through the wide spaces among the sighing pines, and he came out into the road just where Penny was passing. He was a sal-low, lank, long-haired man in home-spun clothes, with a blanket over his shoulders, and on his head a battered straw hat. He greeted Penny first with a stolid stare, then a nod, then a sort of grunt, and Penny, mustered the daring to ask him whither he was bound.

"Lankster's Cross-roads," was the brief response. "Gee! Haw!"

"I am going there too," ventured Penny. "I'd like to get there before night."

The man eyed her askance a few moments before he replied:

"You'll have to trot spry."

Penny had hoped for the offer of a ride, but she was not abashed by the man's obtuseness. "I've a silver half-dollar I'll give you," said she, "if you'll take me in your cart."

The man gave her another side-long, lingering glance, his preternaturally grave face puckering into a reluctant, flitting smile, and said, briefly, but not uncourtously, as he halted his ox:

"Git in."

Penny thankfully obeyed.

"Reckon ye don' know Joe Lankster none, ef ye air countin' on a welcome," said the man, glancing over his shoulder at her, after they had jolted on in silence for some distance. "He's one of them sort don't set much by women folks. He's gwine on forty, and a bachelor, an' like enough to stay so. Air ye any on his kin?"

"I'm his niece," said Penny.

"Oh—ho?" said the man, and was silent thereafter for the rest of the journey.

By sun-down they came within sight of the Cross-roads store. At the first glimpse Penny caught of the smoke curling from the chimney, she drew forth her silver half-dollar, all the money she had in the world, but she was ready to pay it right royally, for she did not wish her uncle to be charged with the expense of her journey.

But the man shook his head, and refused even to look at the coin.

"I don't charge nothing fur a lift," said he, with rough kindness. "Ef Lankster's a mind to stand treat when I git thar, it'll be all right;" and thereupon, he became stolidly blind and deaf and dumb to all further urging, so that when they stopped in front of Joe Lancaster's wayside store, Penny, perforce, returned her money to her pocket, and stiff with cold and fatigue, and faint with hunger, dismounted.

CHAPTER IX.

GENTLEMAN JOE.

MR. JOSEPH LANCASTER, dressed in what the people of that region called "sto'-bought cloes," whose gloss was all in the seams, was resting his tall length against one of the posts of the piazza in front of his domicile, vigorously fiddling in honor of the day. His fiddle was his hobby, and he made it do unstinted duty on all festive occasions. Others might celebrate Christmas by drinking whiskey and firing guns, but Gentleman Joe, as he was called, half in derision, and half in admiration, though not averse to his toddy, and admirably tolerant of uproar and confusion, delighted to make the day merry with many a fine tune, lapping his senses in an elysium of sound that rendered him oblivious of all mundane affairs. And this was his blissful condition when his niece, Penthesilea, presented herself at his door. His long, fodder-colored hair was tucked behind his ears, and hung in wiry locks over his coat-collar; his beard of the same dingy hue caressed his fiddle, while his unwearied right arm deftly plied the bow, and the fingers of his left hand nimbly touched off the crotchets and quavers that went to the composition of Money Musk. His blue eyes gazing dreamily into space took no heed of the objects that crossed his vision, and Gentleman Joe was never known to silence his fiddle until his tune was ended.

Fatigue and hunger had somewhat chilled Penny's spirit, and she hesitated on the step; her escort, however, strode on, and shouted to the man of music:

"See here, Joe Lankster! Stop that infernal chune, can't ye, an' make folks welcome! Here's yo' niece, I say, likely young gal, come to see ye."

Joe Lancaster dropped his bow arm and his jaw at once, and stared blankly. He was not expecting Penny, and very naturally he did not recognize her, as he had not seen her for the last four years, or more. He was accustomed to give Lancaster's Tavern a wide berth,

not liking the society of his brother's wife, on account of whom he held matrimony in abhorrence.

"Pen-the-silea?" he ejaculated, hoarsely. "Nothin the matter, is ther'?"

"Nothin' much," Penny answered, choking a sob. "I've come to see you at last, that's all."

"Well, come in, come in," he said, taking her by the hands and kissing her resoundingly. Then with a nod to his other guest, he led the way through the dark, disorderly store into a back room, where there was a bright wood fire burning in a wide fireplace.

Mr. Lancaster kicked aside a dog that had monopolized the hearth, dragged forward two splint-bottomed chairs, and invited his guests to sit down; himself remaining standing, staring in sore perplexity at Penny, and wondering why she came.

"I say, Lankster!" said Penny's friend in need, "that leetle gal must a wanted to see ye, she wuz trudg-ing it a-foot, an' all by herself. I *reckon* she's kinder hongry; an' as fur me—I'm *that* dry."

Mr. Lancaster took the hint, his sorely puzzled countenance broadening with a genial smile.

"My cook and that nigger Sam are taking Christmas," said he. "Gone off to some frolic, and both drunk by now, I reckon. But there's some cold biscuits and bacon in the safe; and Penthesilea, if you'll lend a hand, we'll boil some eggs and roast some potatoes."

While he was speaking, he set forth on the mantleshelf a suggestive black bottle and a green glass tumbler, with no further comment than a nod to Penny's companion who, waiting for no formal invitation, poured himself out a "dram" and swallowed it.

"Yes, and I'll tell you what!" exclaimed Gentleman Joe, with sudden energy, "We'll do something in honor of Christmas! We'll have an egg-nog, and then I'll play you some tunes, Halloway." In his heart, Joe Lancaster wished this Halloway out of the house, that he might learn the secret of Penny's visit, but he could not refuse him such cheer as was his to offer.

"No, by thunder!" said the unappreciative Halloway. "None o' yer chunes for me. I'll eat yer biscuits and bakin, and I'll not turn my back on yer aigg-nog; but feed me quick, for I must git on ter Parrish's

to-night, Christmas or no Christmas, and it's a good five mile from here. I 'lowed to do some haulin' to-morrer, of shingles, for my haouse is come toe that pass it's got to have some roofin' done."

"Why don't you go to Perdico Mills ; ain't it nearer?" said Gentleman Joe, pausing in his hospitable preparations.

"Well, I always *been* to Parrish's," drawled Holloway.

Joe Lancaster, nothing loth to speed the parting guest, soon made ready his frugal feast ; and Holloway in haste to be gone, bolted his indigestible supper in huge mouthfuls, doing ample, though hurried justice to the egg-nog, and took leave with a grim hilarity.

At last, then, uncle and niece were alone, and Joe Lancaster's overpowering curiosity could be satisfied.

"It's your step-mother, Penthesilea?" with confident interrogation, while he slowly rubbed his chin. "I *s'pose* it's your step-mother?"

Penny understood him. "No," she said ; "it's *everything*, uncle Joe, and I'll tell you all about it." Tired though she was, she felt it impossible to sleep until her explanation should be made. "I just *couldn't* stay any longer. I'm no particular good to anybody. I don't seem to fit into any place there. I did try to do something with the boys ; it's a shame to see them growing up so shiftless, like so much cattle ; but—it was no use—"

"Exactly," interrupted Mr. Joseph Lancaster with unction. "They're the spawn of their dam."

"If they would give me any sort of a chance," continued Penny. "But you see how it is, Uncle Joe ; every improvement I try to make comes to nothing—and that tavern life *chokes* me. I want the free air, and I want to see the world—to try life for myself. I could make something of it—"

She paused, not in discouragement, but in sheer inability to express her aspirations.

"I see, I see, Penthesilea," said Uncle Joe, with a sagacious nod. "You've been getting *educated*, so they tell me. Why, bless you, that's the thing *I* wanted to do, to see life—it's what I want to do still. Education makes us so."

"And so I came away," Penny remarked, simply, acquiescing in her uncle's view.

"Of course, of course," assented Gentleman Joe, rubbing his hands. "I don't blame you, Penthesilea; commendable ambition. *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia*, as Juvenal says. You see I don't forget my Latin. And—and—what's become of that—that Yankee that took your education in hand, eh? You see I've heard about it. It was your name that attracted his attention, so, remotely, you are indebted to me; your education is partly my work, and I feel beholden to that young man for completing what I began. What's become of him, eh?"

"He's gone," responded Penny, briefly.

"Oh?" said her uncle. "You weren't—sweethearts, eh?"

"No," Penny answered, indignantly.

"And you ain't following after him?"

"No," said Penny still indignant. "How could I follow him, if I wanted to? He is going all over the world. He left eight months ago, and there's an end of him forever, so far as I am concerned."

"You're a sensible girl, Penthesilea," Uncle Joe declared with admiration. "I always said so."

"Yes I think I am," Penny assented, complacently. "If I had a chance I could make something comfortable of life. But I had no chance there at the tavern, and so I came away here to you."

"Good Lord, Pen!" exclaimed Uncle Joe, slapping his lanky thighs. Do you call *this* seeing the world? *Tibi serviat ultima Thule*, as Virgil says. Why, it's the end of creation."

"It's better than the tavern," said Penny, stubbornly. "And I can't go any farther. Besides, Uncle Joe," she continued, eagerly, "I'm young enough still—some chance might come to me——"

"Not in this confounded outpost of civilization," said Uncle Joe, hopelessly.

"And in the meantime," Penny persisted, undaunted, "I could be living a life of some use. There is much I could do for you, Uncle Joe, if you would let me?"

"Lord, child," said Uncle Joe, with a subdued impatience, "it's no use talking; I'm too pore; I'd adopted

you long ago, but I'm too pore ; and this place is too outen the way."

"You wouldn't *stay* poor if you had some one to manage for you," said Penny, confidently. "And as to this place being out of the way, it is just in the way for people to come by and eat up your provisions. It doesn't so much matter about that man eating his supper here to-night," she continued, coloring at the recollection of Halloway's refusal to take pay for her ride ; "but people are always doing that, and you may as well take advantage of your position to keep a public table *and charge for it.*"

"'Twouldn't do, never, Penthesilea," said her uncle, shaking his head. "The spirit of the community is down on any such proceedin's ; I'd be a by-word through the county. I couldn't think of such Yankee closeness. And it's too lonesome for a young girl, Penthesilea. You'd die of the lonesomeness."

"No, I wouldn't," said Penny, stoutly. "I couldn't find it lonesome if I had my work to do. I could do a great deal if I had a chance."

"A great deal?" slowly repeated Gentleman Joe. "As what?"

"Oh, in the way of gardening, planting, making things grow. We might have a little farm, Uncle Joe?"

"Land's too pore," said her uncle, sententiously.

Penny's heart began to sink.

"I should think," she faltered, "that by management—"

"'Tain't no manner of use, I tell you, child. Gophers and salamanders can pick up a livin' here, but not white folks. The most you *can* do is to degenerate to the level of yo' surroundin's, and forgit yo' education. That's what I've come to, pretty nearly ; and my mind has long been made up to get outen this barren trap as soon as I can."

Penny did not believe a word of this ; not that she suspected her uncle of deliberately attempting to deceive her, but she knew him by family tradition for a visionary.

"I don't know why you should complain of the land being poor," she said, ignoring his threat of emigration.

"I remember your garden that day I spent here, four

years ago ; things grew there as they ought to grow in a garden."

"Yes," said Uncle Joe, with complacency, "gardening is like fiddling ; you can't do it unless you have the gift."

"I am sure I have it !" cried Penny. "I mean the gardening gift. Ah, Uncle Joe, how I should like to stay with you and work in that garden."

"It can't be, child ; I tell you it *can't* be," said Uncle Joe, obdurately. "I'm in dead earnest about quitting the place. I've had a hankering all my days to see the country beyond the Rocky Mountains, and I'm only waiting for the sheriff to sell me out to pack up my fiddle and go."

"I could go with you," said Penny, desperately, as she felt the world slipping from beneath her feet.

"Oh, you couldn't, Penthesilea. If I had money, I wouldn't say no to you ; but as it is, you'd hamper me to death, and that's the honest fact. You can't tie onto me, Penny ; I don't want the responsibility of no woman-kind in any shape or form."

"You don't mean to send me back home?" cried Penny, tragically.

"*Not if I know it*, my girl. I've too accurate an insight into your step-mother's disposition to do you any such ill-turn. I can't take you out to California ; I'd as lief go with my hands tied ; but what I can do for you I will. I'll put you in a way to see the world, if you've the courage to help yourself."

"I've the courage for anything," said Penny, "except to stay at the tavern."

"Well, well," said Uncle Joe, "it's getting late. You'd better go to bed. I'll mature my plan and talk it over with you in the morning. There's a bunk in that little room off the staircase. Go to bed, child ; we'll talk business to-morrow."

So saying, Uncle Joe stuck a tallow candle into a bottle, lighted it at the fire, and said good-night as he handed it to his niece.

Penny went to bed and to sleep, but Gentleman Joe sat over the embers until late in the night, planning her future, or planning so much of it as he could control

In his earlier years, Mr. Joe Lancaster had served as

a clerk in a dry-goods house in Savannah, and there he had formed the acquaintance of a Mrs. Braid, a fashionable milliner, whose life he had saved at the risk of his own when her house was burned. He knew that he could count upon Mrs. Braid as a friend, and to Mrs. Braid he determined to confide his niece.

He told Penny of his plan early the next morning. She was digging in the garden, not with any ulterior design of influencing her uncle, but simply because she never could resist the temptation held out by a hoe-handle and a weedy garden-bed.

Penny heard her uncle with a sinking heart; to exchange a hoe for a needle, the free air of a garden for a milliner's close room seemed to her a doom little short of the penitentiary: but her stout good sense came to her aid. She reflected that such a life need not last forever, and that by diligence and good management she might make the milliner's needle bore its way at last to the open fields she loved. She accepted her uncle's offer thankfully, therefore, and Gentleman Joe was pleased.

"You see, Penthesilea," he said, consolingly, "just as things stand, it's about the best within the compass of my means. We *have* got an old maid cousin, used to set great store by me, Cousin Zobelias Ann Loftus. She lives on a farm of her own, somewhere up in the hills; but bless you, I've lost sight of her too long ago. Now, if you could catch on to her—"

"No, no," said Penny, flushing scarlet; "I can ask *you* to give me a lift, Uncle Joe; but I'm not going hunting up kin to help me on. I'll try my best at Mrs. Braid's."

"Maybe you're about right," said Gentleman Joe, reflectively. "And I'll tell you what, Penthesilea," he continued, with animation, "I know something of city life, and you sha'n't go there unprovided. You must have a trunk—I'll let you take mine; and I reckon there are things a plenty in the sto' to fit you out proper. Come along in to breakfast, and then we'll see."

Accordingly, after breakfast, Joe Lancaster gave his niece an outfit of the best his slender stock of goods permitted. There was a piece of green worsted with black stripes, which he insisted she should make into a

dress ; and to this he added a red shawl, a blue ribbon for her hat, and a gay cotton parasol. Presumably, Mr. Joseph Lancaster's taste had degenerated to the level of his surroundings. Penny, however, saw nothing amiss in his selections, and was grateful beyond words for his gifts. Meantime, pending the making of the dress, and the mending of Mr. Joe's dilapidated wardrobe, Mrs. Braid was written to, and a favorable answer being received, Penny was, to use her uncle's mercantile phrase, duly shipped to Savannah, consigned to Mrs. Braid. Mr. Joe took her himself, in an ox-cart, borrowed of a neighbor five miles distant, to the nearest railroad station, and there bade her farewell, slipping into her hand, along with her ticket, a five-dollar bill, almost a fortune, in Penny's eyes.

CHAPTER X.

PENNY'S FRIEND.

AT Lancaster's Tavern, the hilarity of Christmas Day distracted attention from Penny's flight, and it was not until the next morning that her absence was accepted as an assured fact. There was loud lament on the part of Mrs. Lancaster and the sisters who doubted not that she had followed Kenric.

"She shall never darken these do's no mo'," Mrs. Lancaster declared, as she rocked back and forth with all the semblance of woe. "No, not if she was toe crawl on her knees."

"She is our sister no more ; we disown her !" cried Mrs. Lyndham, tragically.

"Just on the eve, almost, of my marriage," lamented Miss Arabella.

Old Archie expressed his feelings only by a downcast head, and a melancholy wringing of his hands. It never entered his heart to disown his child, but he hadn't sufficient force of character to declare his conviction that Penny was blameless, and that her family

had no right to turn against her. Mrs. Lancaster's will was not to be lightly crossed, and he weakly took refuge in the hope that wherever Penny was she might find herself too comfortable ever to come back to Lancaster's Tavern, seeing that he could not dare to make her welcome. It was his belief that she had gone northward, and for a day and a half, he tried, in his feeble way to find some trace of her. It never occurred to him, nor to any other member of the family that Penny had gone to the Cross-roads, and Gentleman Joe might be trusted to keep her counsel, as well as Dr. Griffith, whose intuitions had guided him so well that two days after Christmas, he obtained a glimpse of Penny at an upper window of the Cross-roads store, sewing buttons on her uncle Joe's over-coat. For her peace of mind, Penny was none the wiser, though the Doctor dismounted and made a visit to her uncle that lasted half an hour. Mr. Joe Lancaster, being of a secretive disposition, did not reveal anything of his plan for his niece, yet he sent the Doctor back to Little Warrenton somewhat comforted.

But Dr. Griffith held his peace, and the first news received of Penny at Lancaster's Tavern, was from Penny herself. She had no intention of hiding from her family. She did not wish to be forgotten by those of her own blood, and she thought they ought to know, first of all, what her uncle Joe had done for her, and next what she proposed to do for herself. She wrote, therefore, as soon as she was settled at Mrs. Braid's to "dear father, sisters and all," explaining her reasons for quitting her home, not professing a penitence she did not feel, but expressing an earnest hope that they would sometimes think of her and write to her.

This letter was answered by Mrs. Lancaster, who, though well-satisfied to have Penny established at a distance, took care to let her understand that she deserved the vengeance of Heaven for thus abandoning her home. Concerning the long-looked-for letter from Kenric, which had come the day Dr. Griffith rode over to the Cross-Roads, Mrs. Lancaster wrote never a word.

Without compunction of conscience, old Archie's wife had seized upon Kenric's letter and opened it, feeling that she thus assisted the vengeance of Heaven. Kenric

wrote that his uncle had died early in the summer ; that he himself had been too harassed by business to form any definite plans, else he should have written before. He begged Penny not to think from his silence that he had ceased to interest himself in her future ; he assured her that he would ever remember her with the friendliest regard. If Penny would permit him, and could win her father's consent, he had a plan to propose, which was that she should go to a certain school he named, and allow him to pay all expenses. He closed his letter by an earnest entreaty that she would not refuse him the pleasure of doing this for her.

"I'm agoin' toe answer that letter !" Mrs. Lancaster declared, loudly talking down her husband's meek remonstrance. "I know what I'm about. It's my bounden duty toe let Mr. Kenric know *she* ain't wuth any trouble. He shall know how she's left her home, an' the shelter of her father's roof secretly, and without provocation, in the dead of the night, and without warnin'. I'm a-goin' to let him know we don't expect to receive her again ; we've shuk her off like dust from our feet. Ef he's so anxious to spend his money an' air his gratitude—an' Lawd knows he was taken care of here ; many's the time have I worritted over his breakfus"—which, indeed, was true—"why, then, let him give my son Gawge a lift, I say !"

But Mrs. Lancaster's letter met with no response ; neither did she hear again from Penny. Her letter to her step-daughter had not been intended to call forth a reply, as Penny very clearly perceived. She knew that Mrs. Lancaster expressed the opinion of the family ; nevertheless, she still hoped to hear from her father and her sisters ; but as days and weeks and months went by without bringing her a letter, she began to feel herself disowned.

In those days, as she sat stitching in Mrs. Braid's crowded little back room, Penny made acquaintance with a suffering upon which she had not counted when she left her home with so daring a resolve to mould her own destiny. Home-sickness took possession of her, and often there were times when her stout heart failed her, and she pined for a sight of the stupid little town she had been half wild to leave, for there she had a

father and two sisters. Till now she never knew how strong was the love that slumbered in her heart for those she had deserted. But it never entered her thoughts to return ; she felt most acutely that her own act had shut her out forever from her childhood's home.

In the course of a twelvemonth Mr. Joseph Lancaster put his threat of emigration into execution, and wandered away with his fiddle, but before he left he wrote his niece a farewell letter, the last she ever had from him, in which he told her that her father had been killed by the accidental discharge of a gun, that her sister Arabella had become a confirmed invalid, and that her sister Mrs. Lyndham was soon to be married again.

This letter was a severe shock to Penny ; its first effect was to emphasize most forcibly her isolation, and then, by a violent reaction, her thoughts turned impetuously to Kenric. Penny was no sentimentalist, yet she had taken a sort of chastened pleasure in contemplating her friendship with the Northern stranger as a beautiful and inspiring episode that had fulfilled its part in her life and was ended—not “dead,” for that would seem to imply treachery or unworthiness somewhere—but simply ended, because the need for it, and the occasion for it was passed ; and she had believed that she was content to have it so ; but now her one insistent desire was to look upon his friendly face, to hear his kindly voice once more. Of his declaration of love she had never liked to think, because she had never believed in its sincerity. She had felt instinctively that Kenric deceived himself when he talked of love to her, and she was both too proud and too true to accept a self-deceiving homage. But now she was half-frightened to find herself questioning whether she had not been over-scrupulous. Perhaps, after all, it was *that other girl* about whom he had deceived himself ? And *she*—Penny always thought of this girl whose name she did not wish to know with contemptuous emphasis—*she* had let a matter of money come between her heart and her lover ! And then it occurred to Penny—and strange to say, the suggestion carried with it an element of consolation—that a great deal of money might be as formidable a barrier to the heart's free course as a very little money.

But all these thoughts Penny kept to herself ; she had no confidants. She was too shy and too bucolic in her aspirations to find favor with a set of girls whose highest ambition was to ape the ladies of fashion. Besides, she had risen too rapidly : Mrs. Braid approved of Penny because she wasted no time talking, and took pains to do well whatever task was set her. Mrs. Braid never noticed that she was growing pale and thin. Mere thinking on the happy fields could not give the pining girl vigor, and the monotony of her life was wearing upon her : day followed day in the same tedious round of ribbons and fringes, and lace and artificial flowers, until her very soul was sick for the happy fields where things had leave to grow in constant change and cheering variety. Within these stifling walls nothing ever happened, nothing ever could happen, so Penny fancied, to send one thrill through her dull heart.

But there came a day when something did happen, something she would never have expected anywhere. It was one of those perfect days of a Southern winter, cold without wind, and tempered by the glory of sunshine, a little more than a year since her coming to Mrs. Braid's. Penny was sitting by the window—she hated the stove—sewing ribbons on a little silk wrap, when the door that led into the show-room in front was thrown open, and Mrs. Braid asked in that peremptory manner to which Penny had at last resigned herself :

“Now, then, Miss Lancaster, will you bring that mantle? It should be ready by this time.”

“It is ready,” said Penny, as she rose.

“Ah?” said Mrs. Braid in a tone that evinced her satisfaction. “Then you may try it on the lady.”

This was a reward that Penny was far from coveting ; but she advanced with as good a grace as she could summon, and placed the garment over the shoulders of a young, richly-dressed, extremely pretty, but delicate-looking lady, who apparently found her an awkward tire-woman, for she turned abruptly away and began to survey herself in the long mirror.

Mrs. Braid had disappeared for the moment, and Penny, who had never been able to learn the milliner's glib art of complimenting, stood gazing in silent admiration of this rarely beautiful creature.

"Where is Miss Fish?" said the lady at the mirror, turning suddenly. "Pray step into the shop and ask her to come?" she said to Penny. "Tell her she can bring Mr. Kenric with her; I would like to have his opinion too."

Kenric! The name sent the hot color to Penny Lancaster's cheeks, and set her heart to beating as if it would stop her breath; utterly incapable of motion, she only stood and stared.

"Why—what's the matter, girl?" said the lady with a laugh. She was accustomed to admiration, open-eyed or open-mouthed it might be, sometimes, but just such a look as this on Penny's face, she had never seen any admirer exhibit.

Mrs. Braid, who had just returned, gave her work-woman a glance of severe reproof, and trotted back into the shop across the passage to obey her customer's behest with becoming alacrity, while Penny remained stupidly staring. She had been so sure that Morrison Kenric had forever passed out of her life; she had never expected to meet him again; she did not expect to meet him now; the familiar name had recalled the old days so vividly that she felt as if she were in a dream from which she would awake presently, to find herself stitching at ribbons and lace. When to her intense, and, somehow, painful surprise, the Morrison Kenric she knew walked into the room, she turned a deadly pallor and caught at a chair to steady her trembling form.

For Kenric had recognized her instantly. His surprise was equal to her own, but it had no such paralyzing effect upon him. He sprang toward her, crying:

"Why, Penny! Why, Penny Lancaster! What a glad surprise to meet you!" And he took Penny's unresisting hands in both his own.

The lady who entered with him, a tall and stately person, past her first youth, turned her handsome haughty countenance upon Penny with an annihilating stare, which, however, Penny did not see: but the younger lady laughed pleasantly and said:

"Don't you understand, Miss Fish?"

"I should think that the—*scene* requires some explanation," Miss Fish returned, coldly.

"And you shall have it!" answered Kenric, with that

charming good-humor Penny knew of old. "Alice," he said, dropping one of Penny's hands, and turning to the lady beside the mirror, "this is my friend Penny I have told you of, the good, kind Penny who took such faithful care of me when I was ill unto death in a land of strangers."

Penny's color returned at this.

"And Penny," he went on, after just an instant's pause, "this is Alice—my wife." As he spoke, he clasped his wife's hand and Penny's together, and gave Penny an appealing look.

"You are not quite a stranger to me," said Mrs. Kenric, graciously. "I am really quite pleased to meet you."

"And so—and so," stammered Penny, "you married *her*—after all—"

"No, no," interrupted Kenric quickly, and with a forced laugh. "*This is Alice—*"

"A very different person, I beg to inform you," interrupted Mrs. Kenric, with a stiffness one would not have deemed her capable of a moment ago; and she followed Miss Fish to the other end of the room.

Penny said "Oh!" she thought she ought to be glad, but she knew that she was not.

"Hearts don't break, Penny, so easily as we expect," said Kenric with assumed lightness, but real embarrassment. He was wondering if Penny was thinking of his confession of love beside the spring at Little Warrenton; and Penny was wondering, half-angrily, if he had forgotten all about it.

"I suppose they don't," said she. "It's all such a surprise, seeing you again, that I—I forgot *she* was married. And I thought *you* were on the other side of the world."

"So I have been for a short trip. We returned in October. I've brought Alice south to avoid our northern winter. And you know Penny, I would have gone to Little Warrenton to see you once again, but Mrs. Lancaster wrote me that you had left your home, and nobody knew where you were."

"How did she know where to write to you?" Penny demanded, eagerly.

"Why, she read my letter; it was received at Lan-

caster's Tavern a few days before Christmas, a year ago."

"And I never heard of it!" said Penny bitterly. She had never had cause to love her father's wife, but until now she had never hated her.

"And why did you leave your home, Penny?" Kenric asked.

At this question Mrs. Kenric came back smiling, and put her arm within her husband's. "It is time to go," she said, very sweetly, but very decidedly.

"I came away to see the world," Penny made answer to Kenric's question.

"You must see a great deal of it here," said Mrs. Kenric, with infantile gentleness.

Kenric looked annoyed, but Penny replied simply:

"It's a beginning." And then she sighed.

"But this life will kill you!" exclaimed Kenric.

"What has become of your farm?"

Penny's eyes filled with tears; at that moment it seemed to her that the desire of her heart for fields of her own was stronger than she had ever felt it, yet more than ever hopeless of attainment, and she could not speak.

"It is time to go," Mrs. Kenric repeated, a little coolly.

"Well, we'll see you again, Penny," said Kenric, and shook hands with her.

Mrs. Kenric merely smiled and nodded. Miss Fish had made her sensible that she should not bestow too much notice upon her husband's whilom protégée.

When they were gone, Penny, oblivious of her calling, turned to the mirror wherein Kenric's beautiful wife had surveyed herself, and studied her wan cheeks with a self-pity utterly foreign to her nature, while the tears dimmed her vision.

"Penny Lancaster, don't be a fool," said Mrs. Braid sharply, and Penny came to her senses and answered her employer's avalanche of questions discreetly.

"Law, how romantic, surely!" exclaimed Mrs. Braid, when she had heard the story. "And now, Penny, own up honest; wasn't he in love with you?"

"Never," said Penny, without a tremor, without a blush, for she knew that she spoke the truth.

"It's a wonder you wasn't in love with him," said Mrs. Braid, insinuatingly.

"I hope I am not such a fool!" retorted Penny, indignantly.

Poor Penny's wan cheeks and dull eyes had made a far profounder impression upon Kenric than her youthful bloom of the days gone by. He saw that this life of confinement was killing her, and he could not let Penny die.

Something must be done, and done quickly; but to offer her money was out of the question; to take her away with himself and his wife was equally out of the question; neither did it seem advisable to buy a farm and establish Penny thereon, for he had no faith in Penny's ability to manage any such undertaking: but he was determined that his friend Penny should have a more congenial life, and in illustration of the proverb, "Where there's a will, there's a way," before he left Savannah, he had secured her a good home with a widow of limited means and feeble health, who was very glad to have a brisk reliable person to look after the domestic interests of her small plantation.

Here began a more congenial life for Penny Lancaster; here dawned for her the happiest days she yet had known; for here she could indulge her bucolic tastes unrestrictedly, and her eyes soon regained their brightness, and her cheeks their color.

For a year she heard from Kenric occasionally; but after a letter announcing the birth of his son, he ceased to write. This last letter cost Penny Lancaster some strange unaccountable tears, and filled her heart with a great yearning to see Kenric's boy, and for several years, as the winter came round, she indulged the hope that Kenric would re-visit the South: she wished to see his happiness, she told herself.

But Kenric had sailed for Europe with his wife and child, and when Penny saw her Northern friend again it was a time of war.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COURAGE OF A COWARD.

IN the second year of the war, Penny's happy rural life in the home Kenric had found for her came to an end ; the mistress of the little plantation died, and the property passed into the possession of a distant relative of the old lady, Major Boscobel Meadon, an officer in the Confederate Army whose settled home was in the hill country of North Alabama. Major Meadon put his newly acquired property in charge of an overseer, and following the example of many another good man in those troubled times, in offering a home to the homeless, insisted that Penny should return to North Alabama with him, and take up her abode with his family. Penny thankfully accepted the shelter thus offered her ; but she ate no idle bread in her new home, and very soon her energy, industry, and helpfulness won her many friends.

Mrs. Meadon, a delicate, nervous, dependent little woman soon discovered that Penny was indispensable to the well-being of herself and her children, and she proclaimed everywhere that she knew not how she ever had lived without this brisk, capable, cheerful young person.

It was mid-winter when Penny arrived at the Meadon homestead, a tidy place about a mile distant from the county town ; but before spring this blooming young woman of twenty-seven had several admirers who made Mrs. Meadon's heart ache with apprehension.

"It ain't that I'm selfish, Penny, it ain't indeed," the little woman protested ; "but there's not one of them good enough for you, not one ! Just wait till you find another like Bosco ; and let me tell you, such as he are scarce as hen's teeth."

Major Boscobel Meadon was a devoted husband, a tender father, a kind master to his slaves, Penny knew, and she believed that there were many more just like him ; but she would not confess this faith to Mrs. Meadon.

But one spring day, when the snow was finally melted

and the plum-trees began to show white against the smoky air, there appeared a claimant for Penny more formidable than any that had yet threatened Mrs. Meadon's peace. A little old woman in a homespun dress and ancient bonnet, and wrapped around with a voluminous cloak of coarse gray cloth, came down from the mountains and knocked at Mrs. Meadon's door, and Mrs. Meadon herself answered the knock.

Now this little old woman was known to be eccentric, and was believed by many to be insane, and Mrs. Meadon trembled when she asked her if she would come in.

"Come in? Of course I'll come in," said the little old woman with sharp decision. "What else do you suppose I knocked at the door for? They tell me you've got a Lancaster in this house; go fetch her along, I want to see her."

In sore dread and amazement, Mrs. Meadon left this unwelcome guest precipitately, and rushed off to Penny. "Oh, Penny," she cried, "I am frightened half to death; there's that dreadful old Miss Loftus in the parlor asking for you. And I do believe she is crazy."

"I do believe she is kin to me!" cried Penny. "Is her name Zobelias, Zobelias Ann?"

"Zobelias Ann—that is her ridiculous—Oh, I beg your pardon! Maybe she isn't really crazy," said Mrs. Meadon, penitently.

"She is my father's cousin; I will go see her," said Penny rising.

A new fear possessed Mrs. Meadon. "Oh, Penny, she will take you away from me!" she cried. "And what will become of us?"

"She can't take me away against my consent," said Penny; "she has no claim upon me."

"Yes; but keep on the good side of her, Penny," Mrs. Meadon cautioned, with sober second thought. "I've heard that she has a great deal of money laid by; why shouldn't you reap the benefit of it?"

"I have no claim upon *her*," said Penny.

"Aren't you the nearest kin?" Mrs. Meadon asked, with eager interest.

"I don't know," said Penny; "but it doesn't make any difference."

And she went away to meet her kinswoman.

She found Miss Zebelia Ann Loftus sitting bolt upright in the middle of the parlor, on a chair so high that her feet dangled free of the floor.

"Well, young woman," said she, with a searching look, "a Lancaster ye air by your favor; and I'll be bound it was Joseph Lancaster gave ye such a outlandish name as Penthesilea?"

"Yes," answered Penny.

"He had more brains than any fool I ever saw," said Miss Loftus, dryly.

"He isn't a fool at all," said Penny. "He just had no—*management*."

"That's what I call a fool," said Miss Loftus with a grim smile. "I don't think *you* air that kind from what I hear tell. That's why I came to see ye. I've took a interest in ye, for my mother was a Lancaster. Come, give me a buss. There! You're Archie's daughter, eh? I've heard he married a Donald. Fine family; so are the Lancasters—in a different way. I'm one of the genu-ine, old-fashioned Lancasters, believe in gittin' my livin' out o' Mother Earth, myself, and I've got a snug, and tidy place, out o' reach, up thar in the mountings, and I want ye to go with me *and stay*."

"Oh, but," stammered Penny, taken aback by this unexpected invitation, "I—I have a feeling that I belong here; Mrs. Meadon needs me."

"Air ye akin to these Meadons, I'd rejoyce to know! Now see here, I'd give you some information as to the people you belong to. There used to be a saying, 'No fool like a Lancaster fool,' which as I take it, is a compliment when read backwards. You needn't think *I'm* a Lancaster fool because I jump at ye like a duck at a June-bug. I been taking account of ye though ye didn't know it; and I ain't backward to tell ye that I want ye because ye *ain't* a Lancaster fool—no more am I. But if ye don't close with my offer, maybe ye'll live to think ye were a Lancaster fool—once."

It was not an enticing form of persuasion. "The Meadons have been kind to me," said Penny; "I could not leave them at a word."

"Gratitood!" said Miss Loftus, nodding her head many times. Upon the whole she was not displeased;

but she slipped down from her perch, saying, "Well, I got no time to fling away ! Ye can come and see me, some, p'r'aps ; and ye'll like it when ye git thar."

"Yes, I will go to see you," said Penny, following her eccentric kinswoman down the steps of the porch, and out to the gate where her queer little conveyance—a rusty, topless buggy, drawn by a sturdy horse—was waiting. "It is very kind of you, and—"

"No, 'tain't kindness exactly : I'm lonesome, and that's a fact," said Miss Loftus, as she climbed into her buggy. "But don't you go to think I'm repentin' of not marrying ; it's jes' because I ain't so spry as I used to be. And you'll let me give you this parting advise : *don't you fling yourself away on that Luke Rosser*, mind ye ? Handsome face, soft voice and winning ways, a good-for-nothing, take it easy—"

"He is a bomb-proof," said Penny, scornfully ; "I'll never marry a bomb-proof."

"Well," said Miss Loftus, in a tone of indulgence, as she gathered up the reins, "he's been coddled all his life." Then after a cautious glance over her shoulder, she continued in a lower key, "*I* don't blame *no* man for keepin' out o' this fuss ; and I don't take sides myself. If they want to fight, let 'em fight, I say, but let me alone. And don't you take sides, neither ; it ain't none o' your fuss."

When Penny returned to the house, Mrs. Meadon was standing in the hall.

"Oh, Penny," she said, breathlessly, "did she want to take you away with her ?"

"Yes," said Penny ; "but I am not going to leave you."

Mrs. Meadon breathed a sigh of relief. "I wouldn't be selfish for anything in the world, Penny," she said ; "but indeed I don't see how I could do without you. Only I hope Miss Loftus didn't go away offended ?"

"No," said Penny. "I promised to go to see her some day."

"Yes, you'd better go," Mrs. Meadon said. "She's laid up a mint of money, so they say ; and it's been a world's wonder who she'd leave it to."

"There's no reason to think she'll leave it to me," said Penny, bluntly, "and I am not going to run after it ; but I'll go to see her because she's kin."

For Penny had felt what it was to be alone in the world. She felt it more keenly when she went up the "mounting" and found her cousin in a little isolated nook, with no neighbor nearer than four or five miles, and she was moved to stay a week, when she had meant to stay but two days.

"I should not like to have a farm in such a place," thought the practical Penny; "it's too far from a market, and the ground is too uneven."

Yet, many a time as she gazed at the solemn heights communing with the sky, her heart stirred with the vague fancy that she felt the meaning of the poetry Kenric used to read to her. Thus she learned to love these agrestic solitudes, and she visited her lonely kinswoman often enough to acquire such a familiarity with the wild mountain country that it became a common saying that Penny Lancaster was qualifying for a guide.

Mrs. Meadon never saw her depart on these frequent visits to Miss Loftus without the fear that she would never return. But Penny had no thought of making her permanent abode in the mountains. There was too much to be done in these stirring times of war, and her ardent, energetic spirit could not endure the ignominious ease of her kinswoman's retirement; there was always something for Penny to do in the little town near which the Meadons lived.

In the last year of the war, this town, lying in the track of both armies, several times changed hands, and was held now by Confederates and now by Federals. Upon one occasion, when the Federals had taken sudden possession, the inhabitants found that all the cattle in and around the place had been seized to supply beef for the soldiers. Now, there were, in that unhappy little town, a number of poor widows with young children, each to a greater or less extent dependent upon her cow for subsistence, and when their loss was discovered a great wail went up. One, less tearful and more hopeful than the others, decided that since the cows had not yet been slaughtered, they might possibly obtain redress if they went in a body to the commanding officer, and each represented her case.

This plan was unanimously approved, but no one of the nine or ten widows was bold enough to head the

procession, and the expedition might have failed for lack of a leader had it not been ascertained that Penny Lancaster was in town ; for Penny's coolness, her courage, her fertility of resource caused her to be looked upon by the women of the community as a resource in every emergency.

Now Penny, as it happened, had walked in early that morning for the purpose of recovering, not a cow, but a fine horse that had been seized as the spoil of war. This horse had been given to Penny by a Confederate soldier whom she had nursed back to life. Penny cherished no sentiment in regard to the animal, but she loved her property, and she was determined to recover it by any means in her power. The widows heard of this, and they waited upon Penny in a body. They knew where to find her. She was at Mrs. Rosser's, for though she despised Luke Rosser for shirking his duty and for his general unthrift and uselessness, Mrs. Rosser had won her regard, and without the slightest intention of encouraging Luke, Penny had fallen into the habit of stopping to see his mother whenever she came into town.

To Mrs. Rosser's, therefore, the cow-bereft widows hastened. Mrs. Rosser was herself a widow, and she had lost her cow, but it had not occurred to her that there was any possibility of recovering it until her fellow-sufferers explained their errand ; then she put on her bonnet and shawl, and declared her intention of joining the petitioners.

"The mo' the better!" cried one of the company, hysterically. "But it's Penny we want for spokes-woman ; she's got the gift of the gab."

Penny, who had an idea that she would stand a better chance to recover her own property if she went alone, objected that she was not a widow.

"But you might a' been," whimpered poor little Mrs. Tobin, who had had no breakfast.

"It wouldn't do for Mrs. Tobin to be spokes-woman, you see, Penny," said Mrs. Jarver, sharply. "Nice mess she'd make of it! And as for me, I'd be sure to get mad and say somethin' sassy ; so widow or no widow, if you've got a shred of patriotism, come on!"

"To be sure," remonstrated Mrs. Tobin, mildly,

“there ain’t so little sense as you might suppose in what I said. Everybody knows that Penny Lancaster *might* a’ been a widow twice over, for there was Tom Grigsby and Putney Jones both wanted to marry her, and both dead on the battlefield—”

“Oh, come on, Penny!” said Mrs. Rosser. “It’s no matter if you ain’t a widow, you’re young and good-looking, and that’s more to the purpose with a lot o’ men.”

“That’s so,” Mrs. Tobin declared, as she smoothed her hair under her bonnet. She was the best looking widow of them all and the youngest, and she knew it.

“But I’ve not lost a cow,” objected Penny.

“That’s no difference ; a horse is all the same. And if you *don’t* come on, Penny, our cows will every blessed one of ’em be beef, and we a-starvin’.”

So Penny was induced to lead the forlorn procession that set off through the mud and drizzling rain of a raw November day, to regain their property by dint of what eloquence and pathos they could bring to bear. Each widow held her child by the hand, or her neighbor’s, if she had none of her own, and thus they wended their way to the building occupied as headquarters by the troops in possession.

The door of the adjutant’s office which opened upon the street was already besieged by a motley crowd, and the passage leading to the inner room was so densely packed by the idle, the curious, and the busy, that the little company of petitioners could push their way only by very slow degrees. Thus it came to pass that Mrs. Tobin, the smallest, nimblest, wiriest of their number, arrived in presence of the officers some moments before her companions had reached even the threshold. The glimpse she caught, through the uncurtained window, of the cattle penned in the yard adjoining, counteracted whatever terror the sight of the blue-coats was calculated to inspire.

“Oh, if you *ple—ase*, Mr. General !” she exclaimed, vehemently, clasping her small, thin hands ; “I’m a po’ widow, with three small children and one cow ; I mean I *had* a cow, and no breakfast, because your men took away the cow, which it was my main dependence. I’m *sho’* it was a mistake : I’m *sho’* you wouldn’t be so im-

polite ; I know you didn't go to take off any po' widow's cow, and my three little children—and I'd know that cow anywhere."

There were three or four officers gathered around the fire, conferring together, but Mrs. Tobin's sudden, shrill, overpowering vehemence had commanded instant silence and attention. One of the officers, who wore a colonel's insignia, rose, and came towards Mrs. Tobin. He was smiling, and the little woman saw at once that her cause was won.

"Well, madam," he said, "if you can point out your cow, she shall be delivered to you forthwith."

Mrs. Tobin sprang to the window.

"Know my cow?" she cried, hysterically. "I'd know old Rose in a thousand. That's her, that red cow with the broken horn, close by the gate."

The Colonel immediately, gave an order that Mrs. Tobin's red cow with the broken horn should be delivered to the owner ; but if he thought he had thus gotten rid of his petitioner, he was much deceived. Mrs. Tobin, elated by her success, and recognizing now one, now another of her neighbors' cows, seized the Colonel by the arm, and ere he was aware, drew him to the window, where, emphasizing her words with her lean fore-finger rapping on the glass, she began to shriek out.

"And sho's I'm a livin' sinner, Mr. General, sir, there's Lou Allen's Brindle, and she's a widow too, and has got a young calf ; do, please, good sir, let Lou Allen have her cow?"

The Colonel consented, and ordered Mrs. Lou Allen's cow driven out.

"And there's Cousin Ann Putney's cow, Cherry ! She's a good cow, and Cousin Ann Putney couldn't get on *nohow* without her. Do, if you *please*, Mr. Genaral, turn out Cousin Ann Putney's cow, and may the Lord reward you."

This request granted, Mrs. Tobin immediately singled out a black cow, then a white cow, then a brown cow, named the owner of each, declared each owner a widow with more or fewer children, "and surely Mr. General wouldn't have the heart to refuse?"

"See here, Colonel," said one of the officers standing

by the fire, "I'll be shot if I don't believe this is all a conspiracy. Is every woman in the town a widow with three small children and a cow?"

"No! no! They ain't!" Mrs. Tobin made answer; breathlessly. "That there big spotted cow, with the tail bit off is Mrs. Rosser's, and she ain't got no children, not little ones; but she's a widow, and a widow without a cow such times as these—General, think of it?"

"Turn out Mrs. Rosser's cow!" said the Colonel, convulsed with laughter.

By this time the rest of Mrs. Tobin's company had made their way into the room.

"Thunder!" exclaimed the officer that had remonstrated. "Here's more of the same sort! An army of 'em, and each after a cow!"

"No, sir; not exactly," said Mrs. Tobin, turning towards him a beaming countenance; "but mostly so, exceptin' Penny Lankster; she's not a widow, and it's her *horse* *she's* after."

CHAPTER XII.

PENNY'S PRISONER.

THE Colonel was standing with his back to the room, looking out of the window, but turning suddenly, he found himself face to face with Penny Lancaster, who had been thrust forward by her quaking companions.

A flush of pleasure and surprise rose in his bronzed face; he put out both hands eagerly, and with a tremor in his voice, he exclaimed, to the amazement of Penny's friends and his own:

"Penny, is it you? Whatever your request, it is granted already."

But Penny, pale as the dead, put her hands behind her, and staggered back.

"No," she said hoarsely, but distinctly—for never had she felt herself so unmitigated a rebel—"No, Morrison Kenric, I'll not shake hands with you, and I've nothing to ask of you. If I had known it was *you* I would never have come." Then she turned and

walked out of the room, the staring company parting on either side to let her pass.

"There's a fine she-rebel for you," said one of the officers, with a scowl.

The whole sisterhood of widows were in dismay. Poor little Mrs. Tobin wrung her hands in terror, lest Penny's discourtesy should bring about a revocation of the edict for the release of the cows. "Don't mind Penny, now don't, *please*, Mr. General," she pleaded. "She ain't a widow ; if she was, she'd never be so masterful."

The man thus entreated only laughed, and bade the women take their cows and go.

"And thank you, *sir*," said Mrs. Tobin graciously. "We wish you luck."

But she did penance for this speech outside.

"Well, indeed, Lucretia Tobin !" Mrs. Rosser exclaimed. "Do you know what you mean by wishing that Yankee luck ?"

"I'm certain sure, I never meant no harm," said Mrs. Tobin.

"Then you *air* a fool !" declared Lucretia's ungrateful Cousin Ann Putney. "Of all the traitorous talk !"

"*Me* a traitor ?" cried Mrs. Tobin, indignantly. "When nobody but me had the courage to talk to them Yankees !"

"And then to go thank him for our own !" said Mrs. Lou Allen, disdainfully.

"Next time go hunt your own cattle !" said Mrs. Tobin, with spirit ; for whatever they might say, it was *she* who had boldly faced the terrible men in blue, it was *she* who had spoken for the crowd ; and it was *her* eloquence that had recovered the cows : the recollection of her prowess gave the little woman a consoling sense of superiority, and she stepped off with a lofty air, as she added, "For my part, I'd *try* to be polite to the Devil himself."

A decided opinion always wins adherents. "Well, yes," said one of the company, "politeness don't never come amiss ; and Penny Lancaster may rue the day she put them hands of hers behind her back."

"What's worse, *we* may have it to rue that ain't no way to blame," said another dolefully.

“ Well,” said yet another under her breath, so that Mrs. Tobin, who was at the head of the procession, might not hear, “ we’ve seen this day how a fool can pitch in and win where sensible folks hold back ; and we’ve seen how a sensible woman can turn fool and get a whole community in trouble, maybe : but, Lord ! if Penny Lankster *had* have shook hands with that Yankee, who of us would have wanted to shake hands with her again ? ”

“ Wonder what it all means ? ” said Mrs. Rosser, with an uneasy sigh for the prosperity of her son Luke’s courtship. “ *I* never heard Penny tell of him.”

Nobody had ever heard Penny tell of him, and in vain did they importune her for explanations ; her only answer was :

“ He used to be a good friend of mine.”

Her heart was too heavy to care whether they praised or blamed her. She had received the greatest shock of her life when she met Morrison Kenric thus unexpectedly. She had taken it for granted that he was still in Europe. She had never once thought of him as exposed to the perils and hardships of war, she had never pictured him as an enemy—and he seemed farther away from her now than when the broad ocean rolled between them. And yet Penny could not shut her eyes to the fact that of all the men engaged on either side, this soldier of the Federal Army was the only one in whom she had a personal interest, and for the first time she realized in their fulness the horror and the desolation of war.

“ Oh, why is he here ? Why does he not go home ? ” she cried aloud to herself, in agony, as she walked through mire and drizzling rain back to Mrs. Meadon’s. In her secret heart, she felt that she could forgive his fighting against her people ; what she could not forgive him was his risking his life in a quarrel that, in her estimation, did not concern him.

She arrived at Mrs. Meadon’s exhausted by the tumult of her emotions, and though it was early in the afternoon, she went at once to bed, in order to secure the quiet her wildly throbbing heart and brain demanded.

“ She’s worried at not getting her horse, poor thing ! ” said Mrs. Meadon. “ But I told her it was no use to try ”

All night Penny lay awake and sighed, but towards morning she fell into a troubled sleep, and Mrs. Meadon fearing she might be ill, would not allow her to be called for breakfast. When, however, a well-clad orderly in Federal uniform rode into the yard, leading Penny's fine horse, Mrs. Meadon judged that it was time to rouse the slumberer, more especially as the orderly brought a note for Miss Lancaster, which he was instructed to deliver into no one's else hands.

Penny arose at once and dressed. She felt so stunned and stupefied that she was incapable of surprise. It seemed a mere matter of course that her property should be returned to her, and yet—she had not expected it. She went out upon the porch and saw the orderly, acknowledged the horse he brought as her own, and then read, as one in a dream, Morrison Kenric's note, the orderly with his cap in his hand respectfully waiting, and Mrs. Meadon and all the little flaxen-haired Meadons standing agape. But Penny was not conscious of spectators while she read :—

“My good friend Penny: Although you refused to shake hands with me yesterday, I am sure you are still my good friend Penny, and I protest that I am not your enemy. I should be glad to see you, to talk with you, to tell you about my life, and to hear about your own; but this must be as you wish; I shall not force myself upon you.

“I send you back your horse. You said you would ask no favor of me; very well; do not take this as a favor, but as a right. Only this I do entreat you to remember, Penny, that should you ever need my aid, I am still, as of old,

“Your friend

“MORRISON KENRIC.”

Penny read this note twice; then she looked up and said to the orderly :

“It is all right. I—I don't know that I need write an answer; but you can tell him—you can tell Colonel Kenric that I thank him.”

The orderly bowed and rode away, while one of the little boys led the horse to the stable.

“Well, to be sure,” said Mrs. Meadon, who thought

Penny ought to show her that note, "*I wouldn't be caught thanking a marauding Yankee for my own.*"

But Penny only smiled vaguely, and shut herself up in her room.

Later in the day Mrs. Meadon heard of Penny's refusal to shake hands with the Yankee officer, and thereupon she retracted her condemnation of Penny's thanks, saying that it was just as well to be on the good side of every one, especially your enemies.

Nothing, however, could win Penny to confide in Mrs. Meadon. How was it possible, indeed, for her to make any one understand the conflict that tortured her, when she did not understand it herself, and was wholly at a loss to characterize it? She had not the heart to destroy Morrison Kenric's note,—the last scrap of writing she might ever receive from him, perhaps,—but she put it out of her sight with a vague fear and tenderness that made her heart ache; and then she went about her various duties very diligently, trying to make herself believe that nothing very extraordinary had happened. She lived divided between dread and hope of meeting Morrison Kenric—a dread that certainly was not born of overweening regard for her neighbor's opinions, and a hope that knew not wherefore it existed, seeing that all was so changed between them; but her dread was possibly greater than her hope, inasmuch as she kept aloof from the town during the fifteen days it was held by the enemy.

At the end of that time, the Confederates suddenly returned in augmented numbers, drove out the Federals, and resumed possession. They came early on a Thursday morning, and there were skirmishing, flight, and pursuit all that day, and part of the next, but by Friday night all was quiet in and around the oft-disputed town.

During all that time of struggle, Penny Lancaster was in a state of agonizing excitement. She climbed through the dormer window and sat the live-long day upon the house-top, watching the conflict across the open fields, while in her breast there raged a conflict as sharp, for if her hope was with her own people, her heart was with him who commanded the Federal troops, and her wordless prayer went up incessantly for his safety.

On the Saturday morning Penny arose early. She

had recovered her composure, and was ready now for helpful work. She announced her purpose to go into town at once and do what she could for the wounded. She had, moreover, a quantity of socks of which, no doubt, many a poor soldier stood sadly in need. But in her secret heart, Penny Lancaster knew that patriotism was less her motive than a devouring eagerness to discover, if possible, whether Morrison Kenric was safe.

She wrapped her heaviest shawl around her, for it was a keen and frosty day, and set off on foot, not without many remonstrances from Mrs. Meadon, who could not understand why Penny would not ride that idle horse of hers, "eating his head off in the stable." But Penny, haunted by the dread that Morrison Kenric might be wandering weary and footsore and stricken, perhaps, by a Confederate bullet, would rather have died than ride her horse that day. "I need the walk," she said, briefly; and Mrs. Meadon ceased her remonstrances, and went in to the fire.

Penny climbed the rail fence at the back of the house, and walked across the fields, to reach what was known as the "near-cut," skirting a little belt of woodland, in the heart of which was a dense thicket of underbrush. As Penny neared this thicket, walking slowly, and lost in painful thought, suddenly from out the wood, there appeared before her, a Federal soldier, so near that she might have put out her hand and touched him. She started, not so much in fear, as in amazement. Her first thought was that her excited senses had called up a vision; the next moment she saw that it was no vision, but Morrison Kenric, covered with mire, haggard and feeble. He did not offer to shake hands with her now, but he smiled and said:

"I am your prisoner, Penny; I surrender to you."

Penny did not scream. She did not rush toward him nor from him, but she turned a ghastly pallor, and gave a quick, fearful, searching glance around; then lifting her hands in piteous entreaty, she gasped in terror:

"Oh, get back! Get back into the thicket, for God's sake, or you are a lost man. I will do what I can, I will do my very best; but get out of sight of the road, I beseech you, I implore you!"

"It doesn't matter much," said Kenric, with a shrug. "I am tired of the thicket ; better a prison."

Penny sprang toward him and grasped his arm, and dragged him into the wood. "I know a place where I can hide you," she panted. "Trust me."

She hurried him along with such rapidity that he barely had strength to follow her, and yet to herself she seemed to move with leaden feet. At last they reached a narrow, deep hollow in the ground, like an open grave, but hidden by the broadly spreading roots of an upturn tree.

"Get in !" said Penny, peremptorily, and Kenric obeyed.

Hardly had he entered when she began to throw upon him, with a blind fury, every branch and stick, and broken bough, and armful of leaves that she could gather, until Kenric cried :

"Enough ! Enough, Penny ! I am smothering ! I can stand no more !"

"Will you hush ?" Penny implored wildly. "You must bear *everything* with the hope of escape. Where is your horse ?"

"My horse was wounded, and he fell at last, and I was separated from the others ; that is why I am here."

Then for an instant Penny's courage gave way ; she threw herself upon her knees and wrung her hands. "Oh, what shall I do ? What shall I do ?" she moaned "God of merey, it is a miserable strait."

Kenric misunderstood her ; a fearful suspicion crossed his mind that Penny might be capable of sacrificing him to what she considered her patriotic duty.

"Traitor !" he cried, in impotent rage. "Rebel ! Traitor ! Did I not *surrender* to you ? But no : it was not glory enough that an honorable soldier should *surrender to a woman* ; you must entrap me here to die, like a rat in a hole, while your accursed brood of rebels look on and make sport—" And he struggled violently to free himself.

"Will you be quiet ?" Penny entreated, as she threw another armful of branches upon him. "Or, if speak you must speak low. Who knows what passing ears might catch your voice ? And if they find you—" She shuddered as she went on piling the brushwood

over him. "I tell you, I am ready to risk my life to save you ; but you must trust me. *I am your good friend Penny.*"

"Ah, Penny, my good friend Penny, forgive, forgive," Kendric faltered.

"I will never forgive you if you do not keep quiet, now, I must go : but I will surely come again as quickly as I can."

"But Penny, I am hungry ; I am half starved," Kenric complained, pathetically.

"And I have not a mouthful of food with me," said Penny in despair. "But I will make all the speed I can."

She left him, and made her way out of the thicket, in a state of excitement that seemed to quicken all her powers of mind and body.

Just as she reached the open wood, she came suddenly face to face with, Luke Rosser, and saw, with half-frenzied intuition that he knew her secret. His handsome face wore a meaning smile that was half a sneer, and, forgetting that deference it had been his wont to show, he grasped her somewhat rudely by the arm, as he said :

"See here, Miss Penny Lancaster, I've heard about that Yankee friend of yours ; you don't deceive *me* by refusing to shake hands with him in public, when you meet him, *clandestinely*, in the woods, here."

Penny was in a fury—hers was never a gentle temper. She doubled her fists and violently struck away the hand that held her arm. "It is a lie, Luke Rosser ! It is a lie" she cried.

"Oh," said Luke coolly, "strike with your pretty fists and call me a liar. I've no mind to harm *you* ; but I tell you what I've seen with my own eyes, I well believe. You've driven me to desperation. I've asked *and asked* you to marry me, and now at last I know why you've always said no—when there are plenty girls would say yes, too. But I tell you"—and here he drew out a pistol and toyed with it—"I mean to have this Yankee sweetheart's blood—except that I may prefer to capture him."

Penny felt a maddening impulse to slap his face : that this "bomb-proof" who sneaked away from danger while better men bled and died, should presume to

boast of capturing a man who was already in the enemy's power, was unendurable to this high-spirited woman, whose sense of honor and of duty was so far above her sense of danger. With difficulty she restrained the torrent of invective that rushed to her lips ; but the sight of the pistol in Luke Rosser's craven hand taught her a quick discretion, for there rushed to her mind with agonizing clearness, the recollection of Kenric's cruel suspicion—a suspicion hardly heeded at the moment, but stinging her now, with keenest pain. Should Morrison Kenric die by that pistol, he would die with that suspicion burning in his heart, and how could she live through the torture of such a thought ? With scarce a moment's hesitation, her resolution was taken.

"Listen to me, Luke Rosser," she said, calmly. "That man is no sweetheart of mine. He has a wife. He is not, he never was sweetheart of mine : but he was a friend to me, a good friend ; he educated me ; what I am, he made me. I have hidden him in this wood, as you know, and I mean to save him if my own life pays the forfeit. I mean to take him away this night ; but I must have help. Give me that help, and I will marry you to-morrow night."

"Good Lord ! You don't mean it ? " Luke Rosser gasped. He was desperately in love with Penny, and Penny knew it.

"You've known me for nearly three years," she said ; "and you know that I keep my word."

"I know it, but swear it, Penny, *swear it !*"

"I solemnly swear," said Penny, lifting her right hand, "that if by your help I can take Morrison Kenric away this night, I will return and marry you to-morrow night, so help me God."

"Amen," said Luke Rosser, with an unction that touched Penny's woman heart with a scornful pity, the first feeling akin to tenderness he had ever roused in her breast.

"But mind you," said she, "you must do your part. You must have me a horse saddled and bridled and tied here in this thicket by five o'clock this evening"—for Penny used the Southern term for afternoon.

"Where is your own horse ? " Luke Rosser asked.

"Never you mind. Will you do as I tell you ? "

“ Yes ; oh yes,” he answered, sullenly.

“ And I must have a pistol loaded ready ; mind you get it,” said Penny, with stern authority ; for though in her extremity she had unshrinkingly sold herself to this man, she distinctly recognized the fact that she had bought him with a price and she meant he should obey her orders now.

“ You talk like a general in the army,” said Luke Rosser, with half-reluctant admiration. P'r'aps you better take this one now ? ”

“ All right,” said Penny, promptly, and before he could change his mind, the pistol he had offered more in jest than in earnest, was in her basket, and he was ashamed to ask its return. “ And you bring the horse at five o'clock ; *be sure* you bring the horse,” said Penny.

“ I'll not forget, you better believe, after what you've promised,” Luke returned with exultation.

“ Yes ; provided you keep at home,” cautioned Penny. “ Keep your own counsel, and keep mine ; and I'll keep my promise to you.”

“ I suppose I may take out the license ? To-morrow will be Sunday.”

“ Yes,” said Penny ; “ you may,” She turned to go, but he called to her.

“ Stop, Penny ! There's just this I want to say. You—you're going away—into danger, p'r'aps, and you've got me cornered so's I can't prevent you, and—and—I don't see exactly, as I could join your expedition—”

“ I don't want you ! ” said Penny.

“ Oh, it ain't that ! But you see, as you've promised to be my wife, yon might give me a parting kiss ? ”

How Penny Lancaster hated that kiss, then and afterwards ! But she knew that it would seal Luke's faith in her promise, and she did not hesitate ; she retraced the few steps she had taken, and kissed him.

“ *That* in token of my trust in you,” she said, with half-repressed resentment. “ But, mind you, Luke Rosser, if you fail me, if Morrison Kenric comes to harm through your treachery, or your *folly*—I'll shoot you ; I'll follow till I find you, and then I'll shoot you ; you'll never escape my vengeance.”

“ Shoot me ? Most likely,” muttered Luke Rosser,

as he looked after Penny hurrying back to Mrs. Meadon's. "She's got mo' grit than many a man I know. It's wuth while to save a Yankee to get her."

And he turned away from the wood, and set his face towards town.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAREWELL.

RAPIDLY retracing her steps Penny soon arrived again at the high rail fence that separated the domestic premises of the Meadons from the fields. She climbed over, hastened across the yard and entered the house by the back door. The walk had calmed her excitement sufficiently to enable her to meet Mrs. Meadon with the composure necessary to the safety of her secret.

"Found walking tiresome, didn't you? Mud is stiff at this season," said Mrs. Meadon in a tone of "*I told you so.*"

"Yes," answered Penny. "I've come back for my horse. I've changed my mind; I'm going over the mountain—it has been some time since I saw my cousin—"

"Well, I approve of that, Penny," said Mrs. Meadon, cordially. "Your cousin is growing old, and kin is kin, you know."

The blood rushed to Penny's face. She hated a lie, and she had carefully worded her announcement so as not to lie with her lips; but she had meant to deceive, for she dared not take Mrs. Meadon into her confidence; yet shame almost overpowered her satisfaction when she found that she had succeeded. She was indeed going across the mountain, but by a road that did not lead in the direction of Miss Zobelias Ann Loftus's home.

"You'd better tell Christie to saddle your horse right away. I'll fix you up a snack in a twinkling, for indeed you've no time to lose," Mrs. Meadon declared, as she went bustling about.

"No, indeed;" Penny emphatically assented, think-

ing of her starving man under the hurricane stump, and in the thought forgiving herself the lie of which she had been guilty. She shut herself within her room while she waited for her horse, and throwing herself upon her knees, prayed fervently, not for her own safety, but for the safety of the friend she was determined to rescue, at whatever cost to herself.

She came out, after this, with Luke Rosser's pistol stuck in her belt, and a bottle of brandy in her hand. The history of this bottle Mrs. Meadon did not know, but of its existence she had long been cognizant, and she had almost come to consider herself part owner at least, on the strength of the anticipation that her husband, Major Boscobel Meadon might return some day, prostrated by wounds, or fever, to be built up by the contents of that same precious black bottle. She eyed it askance, as Penny came forth, and ventured the suggestion that old Miss Loftus not knowing about the brandy, would just as soon have blackberry wine, which Mrs. Meadon professed a great willingness to spare in exchange for the superior article.

But Penny said "No."

"Well," sighed Mrs. Meadon, renewing the attack by a flank movement, "there's half a dozen hard boiled eggs in this basket, Penny, and some buttered biscuits. And you'll find salt in the little box, and fried chicken and potatoes, the best I can do for you. You can hang the basket on the horn of your saddle; *but*—that bottle will be main unhandy, I'm thinking. The *half* of it, now, seeing you are bent on being generous, the half of it, in a physic-bottle would be more convenient to carry."

But Penny was not to be so persuaded.

"Well, surely, I admire free-handedness as much as anybody," said Mrs. Meadon, with a martyred air; "but I must say it looks like a reckless flying in the face of Providence to carry free-handedness too far. Why, Penny, s'pose sickness should overtake you? You might die for lack of a little of that very brandy!"

"Nobody's loss," said Penny, with irresistible bitterness, thinking of her marriage on the morrow.

"And I'm blessed if you are not carrying a corkscrew!" exclaimed Mrs. Meadon.

"You know I can bring *that* back," said Penny, hastily, as she turned away to mount her horse.

"Well, to be sure, a wilful woman must have her way," said Mrs. Meadon resignedly, as she beheld the basket with the bottle in it, dangling at the horn of the saddle. "When are you coming back?"

"To-morrow night, please God ;" Penny called back, as she rode out of the gate, which an old gray-headed negro held open.

The dogs barked, the children shouted, and Penny, for a moment forgetting discretion, set off at a gallop.

"What possesses her, I wonder to ride at that gait?" said Mrs. Meadon to herself, left alone upon the porch. "She must forget that she has a good ten miles ahead of her."

But Penny quickly recovered herself and checked her horse, riding slowly, and not daring to enter the wood until she was securely out of sight of the house. The moment she felt sure that her course could no longer be watched, she turned aside from the road, urging her horse forward as rapidly as the surrounding growth would permit. When she reached the thicket, she dismounted, led her horse behind a belt of low, bushy cedars, and having tied him there, hastened with her basket to Kenric's hiding-place.

The appalling stillness around struck a chill to her heart. Not a sound was to be heard, save the occasional, low, sad rustle of the dry leaves. What if he had died where she had hid him? Perished of hunger and cold, and exhaustion! What if he had been discovered and murdered there? War or no war, such a taking-off would be murder. Trembling so that she could hardly stand, she leaned above the brush-heaped hollow, and through the ragged boughs she had piled above him she saw him lying so still she thought he must be dead, and a cry sprang from her heart to her lips.

Faint as was that cry, it woke him. "Oh, my good friend, Penny ;" he said eagerly. "Have you come at last? *And have you brought me something to eat ?*"

"Yes, oh, yes : " Penny answered with joyful relief. "But I can't have you make yourself ill with eating too much, remember."

He pushed away the brush with which he was cov-

ered, so that he could sit partly upright, and took the food she gave him until she would give him no more.

"No," she said in answer to his appeals, and with the same half-persuasive, half authoritative tone she had used towards him years before, when he was ill at Lancaster's Tavern, "You can have no more. It is but little past noon; you can't leave here before dusk; then you shall have some supper."

"But I am so confoundedly cold;" he complained. "And cramped, and stiff."

"Stay a moment," Penny answered. "See; here is some brandy for you, if you can drink it from the bottle?"

"Surely I can, if I must;" he assented, with a laugh. Then when he had tasted. "French brandy, as I live;" he exclaimed. "Where did you get this, Penny?"

"You are only drinking your own," said Penny. "I brought it away from the tavern. You left it there, after that spell of fever, don't you know?"

"Why that is years ago;" cried Kenric. "Penny, Penny, you are my good angel! What a wonderfully provident little angel; I trust myself to you with absolute, unquestionable security, General Lancaster."

"I am going to take you across the mountains this night," said Penny; "but I must leave you until the time comes. I know every path and secret way around here. I have my horse which you sent back to me, and you are to ride him. Oh, don't you see," she interrupted herself, with a burst of deep feeling, "how it is the good you do that saves you?"

"But how will *you* ride and how will you return?" asked Kenric.

"There will be a horse brought to this wood by five o'clock. saddled with a man's saddle, but we will change the saddles, for my horse, I know, can be depended upon."

"Another horse? And who will bring this horse?" asked Kenric, with quick misgiving.

"The man I am to marry," answered Penny.

"Ah, so? Then he may be trusted. And you are to be married, Penny?"

"If he does not fail me.

"How 'fail you'? Is it possible he could play fast

and loose with you, Penny? Does he not know your worth?"

"I trust he will not play fast and loose with me;" cried Penny, clasping her hands nervously. "It would be the worse for him, if he did."

Kenric laughed. "And he can forgive your rescuing a Yankee?"

"I suppose so," said Penny, uneasily. "Now I must go. I dare not stay here; somebody might be coming."

"One word—just one word more, Penny," Kenric entreated. "You love this man you are to marry?"

"Oh, never mind about him," said Penny, impatiently, as she moved away.

She dared not linger in the vicinity of the wood, so she mounted her horse again, and went slowly away, by an old abandoned road, where there was little probability of meeting any one. When, at last, after, as seemed to her, endless hours, the sinking sun sent its red and wintry gleam through the leafless boughs, she hastened to the spot where Luke Rosser had promised to have the horse in readiness for her.

The horse was not there. For a moment her brain reeled with an agony of rage and dread, for Penny was faint with hunger, excitement, and fatigue. She had not tasted a mouthful of food since breakfast, because she knew that the rations Mrs. Meadon had provided would not suffice for two, and she hoarded what remained for Kenric alone.

For an instant only, Penny's brain reeled; the spirit in her was stronger than the flesh, and scorned the body's weakness; she roused herself to devise some new plan for her prisoner's escape. But just as she had reluctantly decided to send Kenric away alone, to put his fortune to the touch upon unknown paths, she heard the sound of hoofs rustling the fallen leaves, and Luke Rosser rode into the wood. Penny who had already dismounted, ran toward him with outstretched hands.

"Oh, my God!" she cried. "I was afraid you had failed me."

"No danger," answered Luke Rosser, as he got down from his horse. "Between your promise and your threat, I'm bound to come up to the scratch."

"Oh, I'll keep my promise, indeed I will ;" Penny exclaimed hysterically. "Only help me to change these saddles ?"

"No ; I'll be shot first ;" said Luke Rosser, doggedly. "I wish I may die if I stir hand or foot more for that Yankee of yours, and be hanged to him—until I have my say out with you. You look like a ghost, and you ought to be taking some care of *yourself*. But I don't suppose it's any use talking."

"Not a bit!" said Penny, sturdily tugging at the saddle girth.

"See here, Miss Penny ! Stop that !" exclaimed Luke. "I'll fix them saddles in a minute ; but for the Lord's sake stop and eat something. I've brought you a snack, for you'll never get through the job you've taken in hand without a good, stout meal. You see," he added, sheepishly, "you're the woman I love, and I am bound to look after your comfort, whatever befalls the Yankee."

Penny stopped short in the work of changing the saddles, shaken by a sudden pang of pity and contrition. Here was this man whom in her heart she despised for a cowardly truant in time of danger, providing for her need at the prompting of his heart ; while the man for whom she was willing to risk more than life to save from capture, had eaten at her hands, and never once had asked whether she herself might not need the food she gave. True, Penny knew that Kenric would never have let her go hungry had he known it ; that he did not know it ; that he did not divine her need, was simply the difference between the man who loved her, and the half-starved man who welcomed her as a friend in his need ; but it was a difference that made Penny's eyes fill up with sudden tears. "He will make a good husband, maybe," she sighed to herself, as she sat down, at his suggestion, upon a moss-grown stump ; "but I shall wish myself dead a thousand times."

Despite this despondent view, however, Penny, who was of a robust constitution, ate with keen appetite the biscuits and bacon her lover had brought her, while he silently proceeded to change the saddles.

"And now, what more can I do for you, Miss Penny ?" he asked, when the meal was over.

"One thing more," said the insatiate Penny, "give me your hat."

"*My hat?*" said her lover, blankly. It was a very good felt that Luke, who was something of a dandy, took great pride in, and cherished with care.

"Yes! Yes! Your hat!" reiterated Penny, who had mounted his horse without his assistance, while he stood half-stunned by the exorbitance of her demand.

"For yourself?" he asked, as he slowly took it off and eyed it with affectionate admiration.

"Don't you see," said Penny, impatiently, as she stooped from her horse, and almost snatched the hat from his reluctant hands, "that if he wears his soldier's cap he'll be more likely to be noticed? And now—" she added with a complete change of tone and manner, "good-bye, Luke! I thank you! Oh, indeed I do, for all you've done. Go home and wait for me until to-morrow night. You have not failed me, I shall not fail you." And she waved her hand in farewell, as, riding one horse and leading the other, she turned towards the thicket.

Luke stood gazing after her, and shivering from head to foot with superstitious dread. "They say it's bad luck, swapping hats after sundown, and maybe I ain't never going to set eyes on her again. Oh, Penny, Penny! Lord bless you, and send you back safe and sound, and the Devil may take the Yankee!"

Arrived once more at Kenric's hiding-place, Penny hurriedly disencumbered him of the mass of brush-wood, and helped him to rise.

"You must hide your cap and wear this hat," she said; "I'll feel safer so."

Kenric smiled as he obeyed. "You are a masterful little woman, Penny," he said, admiringly.

But Penny did not smile; she was in no mood to be elated by compliments. "Here is a pistol for you," she added, gravely.

"Why, I have my pistol," answered Kenric. "Keep that yourself, Penny; you may need it on your return."

They mounted their horses and rode swiftly and in silence. It was already dark, and Penny believed that if she could only get safely out of the wood and into a certain road, lonely and little frequented, but well known to her, that she might feel secure of escape; therefore,

not until they were some miles on their way would Penny allow her charge time for food.

The wind had risen, after they started, and the night proved wild and stormy, the road rough and long. They went warily through the dark, keeping close together and talking but little. At intervals they spoke of the old time before the war, when Kenric vegetated at Lancaster's Tavern and Penny was his pupil.

"I remember saying, when I undertook your instruction," whispered Kenric, "that I had an idea I should be better paid, some future day, than any money could pay me. Oh, Penny, my brave Penny! what a prophecy!" And he stretched his hand across the darkness and pressed hers.

"Oh, why do you not go home?" sighed Penny, with passionate adjuration. "What business is it of yours to be fighting people who have never interfered with you?"

Kenric shook his head, though in the darkness he knew she could not see him. "You and I, cannot discuss that question, Penny," he said, and sighed.

"But you have a wife and child," she insisted; "you belong to them."

Kenric sighed. "My wife is in Europe," he said.

"And you—*here!*" said Penny, with hot indignation; and then she was made aware by his silence that Kenric's marriage had not been happy. "And the boy?" she asked, anxiously.

"Ah, yes, the boy!" Kenric responded, in a tone between gladness and anguish. "Harry is nearly ten years old now. I wish I could show him to you, Penny."

Penny's heart gave a great throb that choked her utterance a moment.

"Some day, perhaps," said she, brokenly. "Is he in this country?"

"He is in this country."

"Some day then," said Penny again.

By the time the sun was in the sky again, they had safely passed the lines, beyond all fear of danger; and they halted by the roadside a few moments, before saying farewell.

"I think I can walk the rest of the way," said Kenric. They had dismounted by way of resting.

"No," said Penny; "No, no. The horse is mine, and I give him to you. But," she hastened to explain, in great confusion "only the side saddle is mine; the other saddle, the hat, the pistol,—all these belong to—the man I am to marry."

"I can go without the hat, seeing that I still have my cap; and I can dispense with the pistol, having my own, as I told you," said Kenric, laughing at her perplexity; "but I'll ride bare-backed before I'll be seen on a woman's saddle."

"Never mind," said Penny, with sudden resolution; "keep the saddle."

"And the man you are to marry—you haven't told me his name, Penny?"

"Luke Rosser is his name," Penny answered, mechanically.

"Will he come to meet you? And will he forgive your rescuing me?"

"What does it matter?" Penny exclaimed, turning away, impatiently. She hated the thought of Luke Rosser.

"You are safe; that is enough."

"No; it is not enough; will he come to meet you?" Kenric persisted.

"Perhaps," said Penny, with a sober conviction that he would do nothing of the kind; but Kenric attributing her reticence to embarrassment, took comfort in the thought that she would be cared for at least on a part of her return trip.

The time had come to say good-bye to her once more, and he had no words in which to express his gratitude and admiration.

"If I live, Penny," he faltered—and then he suddenly bared his head, knelt down and kissed her hand: there was no other way to tell her what he felt.

Penny did not speak, nor look towards him; she got upon her horse and rode away.

A drizzling rain was falling, and the wind was bleak, but Penny Lancaster was conscious only of the fact that she was going back to marry Luke Rosser, to make a sacrifice of her life more dreadful than yielding it up to

death. The excitement that had sustained her through her hazardous undertaking had subsided, and she no longer felt herself a woman of heroic mould, but only a miserable victim, ready for the sacrifice. She had saved her friend, but at how tremendous a cost to herself he would never know. She thought of the pistol she carried, and in terror of the temptation to take her own life, she hurled it far into the woods, then dropped the bridle upon her horse's neck, and burst into violent weeping.

But the thought that she might by any evasion or postponement, escape the fulfillment of her word never once entered her upright mind. Her one fit of weeping over the ruin of her future indulged in, Penny Lancaster was herself again, and she rode on calmly, determined to redeem her promise, to marry Luke and make the best of it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INDEPENDENT VIEWS OF MISS ZOBELIA ANN LOFTUS.

It was already growing dark when Penny came in sight of Mrs. Meadon's house, but still she could see, as she rode into the gate that a little crowd had assembled there, and her heart swelled with resentment against the precipitate bridegroom. A moment before, she had been glad that he had not ridden to meet her, she had been thankful to escape the manifestation of a devotion that irritated her because she could not respond to it; but now, with true feminine inconsistency, she railed at him in her heart for gathering a crowd to witness the wedding, instead of concerning himself about her safety. "He may be trusted to keep out of harm's way," she bitterly thought.

On the piazza were several men, soldiers in Confederate uniform: not one of them offered to assist her to dismount; they stared at her sternly, as she came up the steps, but not one of them offered to remove his hat—a discourtesy she was too wearied and excited to note.

She passed on into the house, where she found a little knot of women gathered around Mrs. Meadon, who was

rocking herself violently in the great rocking-chair, and dabbling her face with a handkerchief that exhaled a strong odor of camphor.

"That ever such a thing should happen under my roof, before my very face!" wailed Mrs. Meadon. "To think that with my husband away in the army, I should have harbored,"—but catching sight of Penny. "Oh, woman!" she cried, hysterically, "do you know what you have done!"

"Yes," answered Penny, who was far from taking in the situation. "I have promised to marry Luke Rosser this night. I am ready to keep my word."

"It is true, then!" shrieked Mrs. Meadon. "Oh, *why* should such a calamity come upon me, a poor, unoffending woman?"

Penny had been a valuable assistant to Mrs. Meadon, and it seemed, therefore, not unnatural that this nervous, timid, dependent woman should raise a cry against a marriage that must rob her of the comfort of such a stay. Until this moment, Penny had not perceived her want of consideration towards her hostess, in appointing the marriage so suddenly.

"I—I am very sorry," she faltered. "Your house has been a good home to me, Mrs. Meadon; I ought to have allowed myself time to consult your convenience, but—the circumstances were such—"

"And it's *all* true, no doubt," moaned Mrs. Meadon. "Penny—Penny Lancaster, you *deceived* me; you've never been *near* your cousin Zobelias."

Penny turned a shade paler, but she did not hesitate an instant. "No," she answered, firmly. "I have not been near my cousin."

She would have preferred never to reveal what she had done for Morrison Kenric, but his safety now assured, she scorned to take refuge in subterfuge or evasion.

"Oh, Penny, Penny Lancaster," burst forth the chorus of women. "To think that you, a Southern girl nursing Confederate soldiers and knitting 'em socks, and even skrimping yourself to feed 'em, and spinning, and weaving, and all—should be piloting a Yankee, and a *Colonel* at that, by night, out of our lawful reach."

A man in a shabby Confederate uniform, with grizzled

hair and beard, who had stood silent against the opposite doorway, staring at Penny, exclaimed in a deep, indignant voice :

“That infernal, irrepressible Yankee again !”

Penny knew the voice ; it carried her back into the past with a rush, and made all the direful present like a dream. She stretched out her hands, appealingly. “Oh, Dr. Griffith,” she said, “*you* know—*you* understand?”

“No ; I’ll be hanged if ever I understood you !” the Doctor answered, with mingled wrath and pity. “I took your part when everybody was against you at the Tavern ; I’ve borne you in mind ever since. It was that Yankee then—that Yankee now. I’ve found you at last. He has always been in your way. Evil be the day that ever he set foot in Georgia.”

“I cannot help it !” exclaimed Penny. “If it were all to do over, I’d do the same.”

“I’m sure of that !” said Dr. Griffith, bitterly, as he strode away, while the women cried out in chorus :

“Oh, just to hear her ! She ain’t ashamed of it !”

“No ; I am not ashamed of it !” retorted Penny, stoutly. “I’ve saved the best friend that ever I had !”

“And he fighting against your country ?” was the indignant remonstrance.

Penny covered her face with her hands. “Do you think that it is not a grief to me ?” said she, with a groan.

“What ought to be done to you, Penny Lancaster ?” said one woman fiercely. “*I’ve* lost kindred in this war. *What* ought to be done to the likes of you ?”

“I am sure I do not care *what* !” cried Penny. It seemed to her that nothing worse than marrying Luke Rosser could possibly happen to her. Was not that penalty enough for what she had done ?

“I tell you what *I* think, Penny Lancaster,” said Mrs. Lou Allen, one of those whose cow had been restored at Mrs. Tobin’s instance, “I’ve always liked you mighty well ; but as a God-fearing, patriotic woman, I do think you ought to be *court-martialed*—I am afraid. Just tried by way of example and acquitted, you know, Captain Caruthers ?” she concluded, appealing to a seedy-looking man who had strayed into the room.

"She isn't of the army," said the Captain with forcible brevity.

"A traitor and a spy!" groaned little Mrs. Tobin. "And to think how we went after the cows together, and she wouldn't so much as touch his hand *that* day! And we just boasting of her, ever since."

"I am neither traitor nor spy!" said Penny, lifting her head proudly. "The Almighty never made me to hand men over to each other for destruction; and as for what I have done, I did it at my own cost. If Luke Rosser could have held his tongue, none of you would be the wiser." For Penny had divined instantly that Luke had betrayed her secret, and a wild hope sprang up in her heart, that the universal condemnation visited upon her would prove too much for him to consent to share: yet no thought of shirking her promise entered her mind. "I made my bargain," said she; "and I'll not rue it. You can tell Mr. Rosser—I'm ready."

"Tell Mr. Rosser!" shrieked Mrs. Meadon. "Oh, she don't know! She little dreams his blood is on her head!"

"*What?*" said Penny, hoarsely, as she staggered back against the wall. "*What* do you mean!"

The women wailed and sobbed in chorus. Captain Caruthers stepped forward and said gravely:

"He is dead, ma'am; shot through the heart."

"Po' Luke!" said little Mrs. Tobin, wiping her eyes. "He was always dreadful scairt o' guns, and to think he should have died of a gun at last!"

Penny's heart stood still; she felt as if her blood had frozen in her veins. "How did it happen?" she asked faintly.

"Well—you see—" Captain Caruthers began, hesitatingly—but little Mrs. Tobin having duly dried her tears, quickly interposed, and spared the rugged soldier the task he was loth to perform.

"It was this morning—this blessed Sabbath morning," she said, breathlessly, "about nine o'clock, he got with some of the boys—you see they had a private bottle, or more, maybe, and they stood treat—well, and everybody knows Luke's failing—po' Luke, I ain't meaning to lay it up against him; but they all got merry, and were a-joking Luke about his po' success in

his co'tship of you, Penny; and Luke ups and tells how you were going to marry him to-night, and they thought it was all brag; so, as you know when the wine is in, the wit is out—only it was whiskey, which it is worse—and Luke he blabbed the whole story. *You* know if it is true, Penny; how he furnished you a horse and a pistol to get the Yankee Colonel safe across the lines; which the boys had been hunting for him; and they being drunk, they swore at Luke for a sneak and a bomb-proof, and one of 'em had a pistol too handy—Oh, Lord! Lord! His po' mother! His po' mother!”

Penny covered her face with her hands and shook from head to foot. She had escaped the fate she abhorred—but at the cost of a human life! Exhausted by her long ride, her long fast—which had been longer yet, but for Luke Rosser's forethought—and by that intense excitement under which she had labored for the past thirty-six hours, she was incapable of taking a reasonable, dispassionate view of the case. Luke Rosser's blood seemed to cry aloud against her, and urged by a maddening impulse to rush away and hide herself forever from the sight of mankind, she started wildly forward at a run; but fell insensible before she reached the door.

When she recovered from this swoon, she was delirious, and for the first time in her life, Penny Lancaster had a long and serious illness, through which Mrs. Meadon nursed her faithfully and kindly, though not without an occasional reminder that a little good French brandy, “if it could be had for love or money,” was just the needful thing to build up a constitution wasted by fever.

Penny Lancaster came out of this fever a changed creature both to herself and others. Her girlhood was gone; in token whereof she ceased to be called Penny, and henceforward was known of all as Miss Penny, a grave and saddened woman, who inspired respect but did not seek affection. Her swooning and long illness had given rise to the belief that she had really felt an attachment for Luke Rosser, and it came at last to be conceded that his death had been her punishment. She found sympathy, instead of blame.

She found also two strong champions. The first was

Major Boscobel Meadon, who came home on furlough just as Miss Penny began to creep about. He had learned the whole story from his wife by letter, and to Mrs. Meadon's amazement, he was hilarious over his guest's achievement.

"It was a bold thing to do!" he declared, with hearty admiration. "She deserves to be breveted hanged if she doesn't!"

"For rescuing a Yankee?" said Mrs. Meadon, with the falling inflection of extreme bewilderment. "Bosco, do you mean to say that *you* would do such a thing?"

"Of course not, Sallie. Don't you appreciate the fact that I am in a different position?"

Mrs. Meadon heaved a sigh of relief. "I *was* afraid," said she, "that you would turn her out of the house as soon as you came home."

"Turn a brave woman out of my house? Why, *you* wouldn't let me!" said the Major, with his big laugh.

Mrs. Meadon blushed at the compliment. "If it hadn't been for the sweetheart getting killed, and her lying at death's door with that fever, we would all have been calling her a traitor," said she, complacently.

"She is no traitor at all," said Major Meadon, with some warmth. "You women are forever complaining that men don't understand you; but the surprising thing to me is, that in some cases you *can't* understand a woman. I'll venture to say Miss Penny would have done the identical same thing for a Confederate."

And when he put the question to Miss Penny, Miss Penny replied with unconscious tact, that she certainly would do as much for so good a friend as Major Meadon.

Mrs. Meadon, whose conscience had been a little uneasy about harboring a traitor, now made herself comfortable in the assurance that she might, with safety and propriety, continue to keep this invaluable companion with her; but about the end of January Miss Penny's second champion appeared.

This was Miss Zobelina Ann Loftus. She arrived at Mrs. Meadon's late in the afternoon, half-frozen, having been all day making the trip through snow and mire. But Miss Loftus belonged to the unterrified, and she had her own way of levying a welcome.

“ I’d like a cup o’ coffee—the best ye got—hot and strong, right away,” said she. “ And I let ye know I’m expectin’ to stay all night—me and my team.”

Mrs. Meadon led the old lady in to the fire, and gave her a comfortable chair. “ You shall have the coffee as soon as it can be made,” said she, with kindly hospitality ; “ and I’ll send right away and have your horses put in the stable.”

“ Oxen, good woman, *oxen*. Ain’t ye seen their *horns* ? My one horse is safe at home. I’m thankful to glory I had sense enough not to resk a horse on sich a road in sich a weather. And how is Penthesilea ? Hear she’s been—well take it altogether, I should say, from what I hear, she’s been—*extraordinary*, eh ? ”

“ She has been quite seriously ill,” Mrs. Meadon said, with a foreboding that Miss Loftus meant to take the treasure away, “ and she is quite feeble still.”

“ Well, fetch her, fetch her ; it’s Penthesilea I come to see, *mostly*,” said Miss Loftus, with candor unabashed ; and Mrs. Meadon sent for Penny, who came creeping feebly into the room, too listless for surprise or pleasure.

“ Land sake ! ” exclaimed Miss Loftus, shocked at her appearance. “ Why, ye are as bloodless as a turnip ! Why, girl, do it cost as much as that to save a Yankee ? Drat him ! ”

Penny burst into tears.

“ You see she is not herself,” said Mrs. Meadon, deprecatingly, in fear that Miss Loftus would take the unresisting Penny away.

“ No ; and she ain’t likely to be, pokin’ round here,” said the determined Miss Loftus. “ She needs a change, that girl do, after all she’s been through. Well ! well ! ” And Miss Loftus broke into a laugh that had a harsh, but not a heartless sound. “ There, Penthesilea, ye air too big a girl to cry—specially over what’s gone and done with. But it do amuse me just to think ”—and Miss Loftus held her sides with laughter— “ how it used to be a sayin’, *No fool like a Lancaster fool*. By the blessin’ o’ Providence ye warsaved from reapin’ of a fool’s harvest, else I shouldn’t be able to laugh at ye. Ain’t I been tellin’ ye this war ain’t none o’ your fuss ? Let them fight it what made it. Ef ye had listened to me,

and come up in the mounting out o' harm's reach—ye'd a missed somethin'. But ye air a Lancaster fool, and I'm jest as proud o' ye as I kin be. I declar', when I hear how you bossed that runaway job o' the Yankee Colonel, old as I be, I flung up my bonnet, and I hopped, I did—whereby I give myself a strain in the back, like a Lancaster fool—with my jubilation. Not that I keer a scratch for the Yankee, mind you ; what's his business here ? Ef all these men, both sides, would jest go home and mind their fields, there wouldn't be no war ; but the last one of 'em will toil and moil in the field o' glory a sight more 'n they'll work in the field o' corn. It's laziness at the bottom of it all, I say, and I got no patience with 'em. But come buss me, girl ; I'm proud o' your grit. You ought to be a Captain I say ; but ye air only a girl, and so much the better for me ! Now, I come to take ye away to-morrow !”

“Oh, she isn't able to take such a trip !” Mrs. Meadon remonstrated.

“Don't tell me !” retorted Miss Loftus, disdainfully. “I'm a-goin' to take her up the mounting. That's what I come for, I'll let ye know.”

And on the morrow, Miss Loftus carried out her design, in spite of every objection Mrs. Meadon could raise. Penny, though she seemed to yield for lack of power to resist, was, in fact, glad to escape from the scene of a tragedy dreadful to remember, yet impossible to forget. She bade farewell to Mrs. Meadon, whom she never saw again ; for it was not Major Boscobel whom the war brought to an untimely end, but his anxious, timid, nervous little wife. She died in the spring, soon after peace was declared ; but she died in her husband's arms.

“Ye'll be a new crittur, Penthesilea,” said Miss Loftus, cheerily, as she guided her team up the “mounting,” “by time ye air a week with me. The mounting is so quiet ; and presently the winter 'll be gone, and the garden 'll be takin' a start, and hens a settin'. Lots to do.”

Now Miss Loftus, though she spoke independent English and drove her own team, was by no means an ignorant mountaineer. She had made her home in that retired spot many years before because she fancied that

her health required mountain air, and because she was eccentric enough to be content with a life of almost absolute solitude ; but her home was no rough log-cabin. She had built herself a convenient and substantial frame-house of four rooms, and she lived in all of them. She was the owner of five or six slaves whom she ruled rigidly, though not unkindly, and she clothed herself and them in cloth woven on her own place. Her floors too were covered with rag carpets of her own manufacture, and her table was supplied chiefly from her farm. She worked hard, lived content, and every year laid by a little money in gold, which she would not trust in any bank, but hoarded securely under the bricks of her hearth. But of late Miss Loftus had recognized the fact that she was growing old. She had begun to feel lonely, and though she was still active and strong these were times when her heart failed her in view of a helpless old age. And now, just as she began to realize her possible need of companionship, Providence had thrown this capable young relative in her way. Ever since the day of her first interview with Penny, Miss Loftus had been struggling for the undisputed possession of her young cousin struggling against Mrs. Meadon's sense of proprietorship, and Penny's sense of obligation ; and now that she had come off conqueror at last, her elation would not bear repression.

“Mighty po' stick, Mrs. Meadon,” said she. “Can't get along without leanin' onto you, spite of all them niggers and children around her.”

Penny's spirit had not utterly forsaken her. “I won't hear a word against Mrs. Meadon,” said she ; “her house has been my home.”

“Well, it ain't goin' to be your home no longer, mind ye. And ye got no excuse to talk until ye git under shelter, lest ye take a cough to last ye all spring ; but *I'm* a-going to say my say, which I've said it before, and shall say it again ; and which it is that ye ain't a nigger, and ye don't belong to no Meadons that is.”

CHAPTER XV.

ALL THINGS COME TO THEM THAT KNOW HOW TO WAIT.

"PENTHESILEA, I got somethin' to tell ye," said Miss Loftus, in a voice of mystery, calculated to rouse the dullest mind.

Penthesilea was seated in a big arm-chair with a pillow at her back, and her feet to the fire. The wintry sun shone in at the two square windows that lighted Miss Loftus's bedroom; the clock ticked above the mantel, a gray cat purred on the reddened hearth beside the churn, while from somewhere in the unseen distance came the droning of an incessant spinning-wheel, and the subdued, monotonous bang-bang and clatter of the busy loom. Penthesilea's hands were folded in her lap, and her eyes were closed; though she had had a good night's rest, she was very tired, and she did not respond to her cousin's announcement.

Miss Loftus thought this state of apathy a symptom to be combatted, and she said again, with rather more mystery:

"I got somethin' to tell ye ain't expectin' to hear. I ain't cared to mention it to the Meadons."

Penny opened her eyes.

"Yes," said Miss Loftus, exhilarated by this sign of interest; "ye'd hardly expect news to travel up to this little shelf on the mounting, would ye, now, Penthesilea?"

But Penthesilea, under the impression that her cousin was only trying to rouse her, sighed and said, indifferently:

"I don't know."

"Well, *I* know," said Miss Loftus, no whit discouraged. "Queer things happen in lonesome places, when you least expect 'em; and the news o' what ye done for the Yankee Colonel, and how ye war born-lucky to escape your promise to Luke Rosser—which you better been hung than married to—come jest as straight to this

door as a bee to the hive, 'count of me bein' your kin, you see?

"I was a settin' here by the fire, and the wind howlin', and niggers and cattle all under shelter, when I heard a horse, tromp, tromp. If I was a-minded, I could encourage myself to be a mighty coward, but I ain't so minded. I tuk out my pistol, and I set my gun ready, and I listened and I heard that tromp, tromp, nearer and nearer, and it came close beside the window; and next I hear a man's voice cussin' the dog, and then a man's step onto my front porch, and says I to myself, 'Zobelia Ann Loftus, it is time ye war inquirin' into this business, which I did. I histed a crack in the window, and says I: 'Who be ye, and what do ye want?' The man was a knockin' at the door, and he says, 'If Miss Loftus lives here, I am an old friend out of Habersham.'

"Well, Penthesilea, if he had a pinte a pistol, I couldn't a jumped wuss'n I did! Why, it's been a good quarter of a century since I was to Habersham County, Georgia, whar we all hailed from; and I just flung my door *wide*, and said, 'Walk in to a welcome, if ye come from Habersham.'

"It didn't make no difference to me, seein' he hailed from Habersham, whether he was Confed or Yankee, but I see at once that he had on the gray—precious rusty it was, too—and the man, he was like his clothes, the wuss for wear, and Habersham or no Habersham I didn't know as I ever see him before. And says he: 'Miss Loftus, I reckon ye don't remember Malcolm Griffith?' Well, I tell ye Penthesilea, I felt like I had been shoved along the railroad of time pretty sharp, for this was a middle-aged man and mo' talkin' to me, and the last time ever I see Malcolm Griffith, he hadn't naire a gray hair, only a bloomin' red, and instead of a beard, mo' freckles than a turkey-aigg.

"And it was precious little of Habersham he could talk; most he had to tell was about you and the Yankee Colonel; for it was back yonder in November soon after ye done it. Well, I was astonished. I had forgot all about my sun-bonnet which I had put it on to kiver my head from the wind when I opened the door, but it come jest as natural to snatch it off and hooray as if I was a boy—but it didn't agree with my back-bone.

I was proud of your sperrit, I tell ye, Penthesilea, and I shook hands the second time with Malcolm Griffith, which he didn't seem to like it Land's sake ! I had to tell I didn't care a feather 'bout the Yankee—let the Confeds catch him and welcome if they can ; it was the sperrit of a Lancaster lifted me plum' off'n my feet.

“ But if ye believe me, that man wasn't satisfied, and he said that as I was kin of yourn, he hoped I would take ye in charge. I asked him if the Ginerall of the Confederate Army was scared ye'd do it again, and he gimme a look as black as thunder.

But it would take mo'n that to scare me, and seein' he mought be hongry, I got up and rustled around and found him somethin' to eat ; but I tell ye, Penthesilea, the loss o' that Yankee must a weighed on him, heavy, for he didn't eat nothin' to speak of ; so I went for some apple-brandy to fix him a toddy, and when I came again, Penthesilea, if ye'll believe me, he was a blowin' of his nose, and a wipin' of his eyes—*right thar*, in that cheer, where ye be a settin' now *the man was a cryin' for spite*. I never said nothin', I was that awed ! ”

Penthesilea rose hastily and changed her seat.

“ What's the matter? Ain't ye comfortable thar? ” said Miss Loftus.

“ No,” said Penny, “ I am not.”

Miss Loftus eyed her with shrewd scrutiny. “ Well ! well ! ” she said. “ Dr. Griffith ain't a beauty sure *and* certain ; but he comes o' good stock ; I knew 'em all in Habersham ; and he's a squar friend o' yourn, Penthesilea Lancaster—better him than Luke Rosser, any day.”

“ Don't ! don't ! ” gasped Penny.

“ Ye ain't a-pinin' for that good-for-naught, as they tell me? ” queried Miss Loftus, anxiously.

Penny shook her head.

“ And ye ain't ashamed of saving the Yankee? Ye needn't be, as I can see.”

“ No,” said Penny.

“ Well, then, child, don't ye fret ; the Lord accepts the deed. I'd a been everlastingly ashamed o' ye myself, if ye'd a turned your back on a old friend because of the coat he wears. I'd a gone after ye sooner, but fust I heard ye war down with the fever and couldn't

be fetched, and then the rheumatiz and the weather blocked me a while ; but I got ye at last, and here ye air goin' to stay."

Miss Loftus was not mistaken as to the benefit of mountain air in Penny's case. Day by day the invalid grew stronger, and with returning health, her conscience ceased to hold her responsible for Luke Rosser's death.

In the spring of that year the war was declared at an end ; the slaves were free.

"Well, I ain't s'prised," said Miss Loftus. "I always expected they'd play the mischief with property, a-shoot-in' at each other in different colored coats, when they'd been wiser to stay at home. But this I tell ye, Penthesilea, no free niggers for me. There air mine what I've fed all these years, a-settin' in a row in the sunshine, eleven o'clock in the day, just *astonished*. They're afraid to go to work *because they don't belong to me no mo'* ; but they'll get hongry just the same, which I won't feed 'em, and that's flat !"

And Miss Loftus, armed with the dinner-bell, walked out into her back-yard, where her half-a-dozen whilom slaves sat "in a rustic row," not chatting, but blankly staring. They had been told to go to work, and they had essayed to obey ; but even the long habit of obedience failed them when they found themselves confronted with the overwhelming fact that they were their own masters. They were not insubordinate, they were simply stupefied.

A little patience, a little persuasion might have restored them to reason, for Miss Loftus, though rigid, had always been just and considerate, and, in a manner, her slaves were attached to her ; but she had ruled them absolutely many years, and she could not summon the patience to bear with this unexampled apathy, neither could she stoop to persuade where she had been accustomed to command.

She stepped out upon the little back porch, and rang the dinner-bell ; it was a big and loud-toned bell, and she held it in both hands and rang it vigorously, and as she rang she shouted :

"Freedom ! Freedom ! Freedom !"

The effect was magical. The negroes rose as one man and fled. They lingered a moment, indeed, to

gather their few portable belongings together, and then they ran down the mountain-side and wandered into the neighboring town, bewildered, uncertain, without assured shelter, without definite aims, utterly unfit to cope with the exigencies of their new condition; and the little farm on the mountain-side knew them no more forever.

Miss Loftus had persuaded herself that she could do well enough without them; but she could not. She was too old to accommodate herself to new methods, and too jealous of her rights as mistress of her own place to listen to any suggestions from Miss Penny. Three years dragged on in discomfort and disappointment; the once tidy little place went to rack, and then Miss Loftus said she would live there no more. She had grown very feeble, and she found the "mounting" too hard for her; and fancying that life would be easier in a town, she set her heart upon going to Atlanta.

Poor Penny sighed over the necessity of giving up the country life she loved; but she had no alternative. So she packed her cousin's possessions, and went with her down to Atlanta, where within a year Miss Loftus died, and Penny, to her surprise, found herself in command of the means to gratify the long-delayed wish of her heart,—to possess a farm of her own.

For Miss Loftus had bequeathed to Penny not only the gold she had hoarded, but two small lots in Atlanta, besides the little farm on the mountain. By the sale of these, Miss Penny realized a sum that she deemed would justify her in the purchase of land more suitably situated than the little farm on the mountain-side. She could make the first payment and trust to her own good management and industry to meet all subsequent obligations.

But Miss Penny had learned prudence in matters of business, and she meant to take no irretrievable step through the inveterate greed of her native instincts; therefore, she allowed herself ample time to make a judicious selection, for Miss Penny was now thirty-five, and she meant to settle for life. She was alone in the world, with no one's interests to consult but her own. Her sisters had forgotten her, and she knew not where to find them, even had she not been too proud to remind them of her existence. As for her Uncle Joe, she had

given him up long ago as lost to her forever beyond the Rocky Mountains ; and Morrison Kenric, she had brought herself to believe, was sleeping in some unknown grave, since, for all that kissing of hands on the muddy roadside, under the murky dawn, no message had come to his deliverer. Or was he happy in his own home again, with his young son, and forgetful of her ? If he could forget, it was the same as though he were dead ; and she resolutely put this early friend from her thoughts, and turned all her energies of mind and body to the purchase of her farm.

She sought her Arcadia in the hill-country of Northern Georgia, for she clung to her native state, though she left the pine-forests and the wire-grass regions far behind her. As it was her object to make small crops remunerative, she desired to settle within reach of some large town where she could readily dispose of her produce, and whence she could draw such supplies as were not to be raised at home ; but the place she bought at last, fell very far short of her views. Instead of being two or three miles from a large town, it was half a mile from a very small town, which, however, possessing an exceptionally fine climate, already bade fare to become a health resort for Northerners in winter, and for Southerners from the coast in summer, so that Miss Penny foresaw a market for her small crops. When she made her first payment on the neglected little place of forty acres, with a dilapidated dwelling-house and broken down fences, everybody said she had gotten a bargain ; but she knew that it would cost many a dollar to bring her place to the perfection she sighed for. Still, she was content ; she owned a farm at last ; to work it, to bring it to perfection, was all the joy in life that she asked—so she fancied. There was a capacious cellar, and Miss Penny had a great respect for a cellar. That cellar, with three noble cherry-trees at the side of the house, and some gnarled apple-trees scattered over a lovely slope at the back, and protected against the northern blasts by a range of well-wooded hills, carried the day with Miss Penny Lancaster.

It was late in August when she took possession. The hardships and inconveniences she was called upon to endure in this beginning, were to the full as great as

she had expected ; but she had made up her mind to hardships, and would not be discouraged, though the neighbors looked coldly, not to say rebukingly upon her "new methods," and vaticinated in their vernacular:

"Hit ain't in natur, fur women-critturs ter wrastle with a farm, and come off conquerors, like men-folks."

Miss Penny did not accept this doctrine, but she recognized the value of a man about a farm, and by dint of diligent inquiry she discovered a robust 'native,' who had been sold out for taxes, and like Micawber, was waiting for something to turn up. Miss Penny, like her cousin, Miss Loftus, had no faith in free negroes ; an industrious, able-bodied white man, she argued, could do the work of her small farm, with occasional assistance. "Joyce was a mighty good fellow," the farmers of the neighborhood testified ; "sober and stiddy, and knowed craps and critturs amazin', and had a good onderstandin' of land ; but some-how-er-nother, he hadn't never seemed ter have no manigemint."

As Miss Penny considered herself competent to the management of her farm, she was content with this recommendation of Joyce, whom she forthwith engaged for the ensuing year. His wife consented to do the cooking, washing and scrubbing ; and as they had no children, Miss Penny considered herself fortunate in securing their services.

But now began her warfare. This pair were as wedded to their old notions, as their employer was to her new methods, and harder to manage than unbroken mules. The trials and vexations that Miss Penny was called upon to endure through this thriftless couple were enough to make her repent her bucolic aspirations in sackcloth and ashes, had repentance been possible to a woman so determined. It was only by dint of fierce insistence that Joyce and his wife, who were both of them disposed to "allow thar warn't no hurry," moved in immediately, and set to work after a fashion of their own that Miss Penny was fain to be content with, seeing she could do no better.

Joyce was a tall, sinewy, heavy-jointed man, with a leathery skin, and long, dull brown hair. He had hard gray eyes, and he talked loud, as if the people about him were all deaf. His wife was a faded, woe-begone,

untidy creature, with lustreless black eyes, and a quantity of jet black hair, the only sign of vigor about her. She had a narrow, flat chest, round shoulders, and a slouching gait, and she spoke in the same loud tones that her husband used, accentuated by an exasperating whine. Immediately upon her arrival, she announced that she had a misery in her side, and sat down upon the door-step to swallow a dose of something that she shook out of a bottle into an iron spoon, both of which she had taken from the pocket of her faded calico, after a jerky search amid its scanty folds.

These Joyces brought a great amount of luggage, for the moving of which Miss Penny had to pay, as Mr. Joyce had no money. The ancient and ricketty "chist," the rough-hide trunk, the unsightly bedding, the spinning-wheel, a few cooking utensils, and an array of soap-gourds were promptly bestowed in the apartment assigned to this couple, who at once proceeded to make themselves entirely at home : but it required some time to open Miss Penny's eyes to the fact that it was the Joyces and not herself, who had taken possession, so eager and busy she was about her improvements.

There was not only the farm to be put in order, but the house had to be made habitable, and Miss Penny discovered, while the scrubbing was in progress, that she must have a well dug. There was a spring of excellent water, clear as crystal, cold as ice, but it was at such a distance that the water had to be hauled in barrels ; therefore, Miss Penny lost no time in marking out a spot convenient to her kitchen and wash-house, convenient also to her contemplated dairy.

It would seem that it ought to be a mere matter of decision for a woman to have a well dug upon her own premises just where she might wish to have it, when she held the money in her hand to pay for it, but Miss Penny was in the power of the Joyces, though she knew it not. Mr. Joyce had his own orthodox opinion on the subject of well-digging, and sharing as he did the views of the neighborhood regarding the "woman-farmer," he would have considered it derogatory to his "jedgmint" to "give in" to Miss Lancaster's inexperience. He had watched her askance as she marked off the spot for the well, and Miss Penny fancied that he

was offended because she had not asked his opinion. But no; Joyce had too great a contempt for Miss Penny's ignorance and lack of experience to take offense, knowing very well that whether or not she asked his advice, she would have to be guided by it, since the power was in his own hands. When Miss Penny asked him to find her a well-digger, he replied with an alacrity that assured her:

"Thar ain't ne'er a better nowhar than my wife's second cousin, Sam'l Hexin, what lives acrost Snaky Bottom, three mile."

Miss Penny agreed readily to his suggestion that he should take the horse—her latest purchase—and go at once to engage Hexin's services. Her estimation of her man of all work rose several degrees, upon finding him so prompt to forward her wishes: she did not overhear the conversation between Joyce and his wife.

"Thar ain't no well-digger nowhar, as *I* knows on, what'll dig thouten he's sho' of water," remarked Mrs. Joyce, as she stood watching her husband's preparations for departure.

"Never you mind, Almirey; she aint agoin' to git no well dug whar thar ain't no water found, *not ef I know it*," replied Joyce soothingly. "It's sheer foolhardiness, and waste o' means, goin' agin natur'; and she ought bless her luck she's got *me* to guide the general plough of this consarn."

And then he mounted the horse and went out at the broken gate and up the road, his lazy wife lolling against the door-post and watching him until he was lost to view over the hill.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIRST STEPS.

JOYCE had departed immediately after breakfast, but he did not return until sundown, to announce that he had found Samuel Hexin at home and "willin' to the job."

Miss Penny wished to know what had detained him

so long, but she was restrained from pressing the question by Mrs. Joyce's ominous grumble that "hit was a pretty come off ef a man, free, white, and twenty-one had to account to a woman, not his wife, nuther, for his comin' and goin'."

However the secret of Joyce's prolonged absence was disclosed the next morning when Samuel Hexin came.

Samuel was a short, thick-set, mouldy-looking man of middle age, with a wheezing voice, and an expression of stolid obstinacy that might well alarm Miss Penny for the execution of her wishes.

"How-d'ye, Cousin Mirey?" he wheezed, stretching out a hard and grimy hand for Mrs. Joyce's friendly grasp. "Been well?"

"'Bout as usual," Mrs. Joyce responded, in doleful accents. "I'm allermost allers po'ly. How's Cousin 'Liza?"

"Well, she's gittin' on, thank the Lord!" said Hexin, pushing back his hat, and rubbing his forehead. "She's got a new doctorment as does her a power o' good."

"Is it pills?" Mrs. Joyce asked, with an animation no one would have supposed her capable of.

"Well, n—o," said Hexin, slowly. "Hit's a mixtur; I disremember the name."

"Law, sakes! And I got a misery o' my insides as is that bad!" Mrs. Joyce exclaimed, despondently. "Joyce will jest have to go back and fetch me the name o' that mixture, or I sha'n't rest in peace. I've tried nigh on to about *everythin'*, and that mixture I'm boun' to have. Ef hit's holped Cousin 'Liza it ought to help me."

Miss Penny, impatient to see her work going on, interrupted this conversation. "Good morning, Mr. Hexin," she said briskly. "I sent for you to dig me a well."

"Mornin'," wheezed Hexin, slowly, with a barely perceptible nod, not touching his hat. "We can't dig ontel the ground is spotted."

"Yes, I've marked out the spot just there, handy to the kitchen door," said Miss Penny, with quick, though mistaken conviction of his meaning.

The well-digger barely deigned a glance in the direction she pointed, and said, turning to Joyce:

"I 'lowed Mem'ry Waits would meet me here. Did you find him to Robinson's, Joyce?"

"No," said Joyce. "I had to go on to Sandy Crook's nine mile further, that's how it come I didn't git back to tell you. But he'll be here."

Then Miss Penny knew why Joyce had not returned until sundown; he had been in search of Memory Waits; but who and what Memory Waits was, she had yet to learn.

"Your assistant, I suppose?" said she, struggling against her annoyance.

"One o' my boys kin give me all the 'sistin' I need," said Hexin, in his slow wheezing voice. "Thar ain't no hurry. I jest come to-day to look arter the job. Me and my boy kin set in ter-morrer, arter the water's spotted."

"Yes, thar ain't no hurry," said Joyce, as if the well to be dug was for his benefit.

"Sartin sure!" chimed in his unkempt better-half, who had taken her seat upon the door-step, and was interesting herself in the well-digger's job, to the utter oblivion of her own imperative duties. She added the information, presumably for Miss Penny's benefit, that Memory Waits was the best water-spotter in all North Georgia, and that Reuben Joyce knew what he was about when he went so far to get him.

A light began to break upon Miss Penny's mind. "Oh," said she, "you mean he is to use a divining rod?"

The well-digger nodded.

Now, Miss Penny was born and reared among people who believed in the divining-rod, but she had never seen it put to the test, and having no faith in it herself, she was unwilling to waste time in the experiment. "But I mean to have my well dug *just* there," said she, with significant emphasis, and pointing again to the spot she had marked out.

"That'll have to be as Mem'ry Waits finds," returned Hexin, inexorably, and not troubling himself to look where she pointed. "You don't want no well whar thar ain't no water. It's aginst natur' to dig fur it, random-like, and what's aginst natur', is aginst luck."

"In course it is!" echoed Mr. and Mrs. Joyce.

"Yander comes Mem'ry, now," continued Hexin, shading his eyes with his rough hands, as he turned towards the road. "He'll soon give us the exac' spot. He's a quick one, Mem'ry is!"

Miss Penny, internally raging, looked in the direction of the well-digger's gaze, and beheld a small, wiry man clad in blue homespun, spring over the fence at a bound, and come running towards the house. Her first angry impulse was to turn away and declare that she would have nothing to do with either the well-digger or the "water-spotter"; but upon an instant's reflection, she prudently restrained her wrath.

The last comer's appearance was in his favor. He was a slight, dark, very young man, with an elfish but pleasing countenance, and a respectful manner. He took off his hat, as he greeted Miss Penny, and stood bare-headed, his long dark locks blown by the wind.

"I am sorry you have had the trouble to come," said Miss Penny, relaxing her frown a little; and glancing at the freshly cut forked stick he held lightly in his left hand, she added, "I don't believe in that, you know."

"Many people doesn't," said the man, pleasantly; "but seein' is believin'."

"That's no matter," returned Miss Penny, crisply. "I *must* have my well where I want it, or I may as well not have it at all. I am willing to pay for it, but I must have it where I want it."

The diviner's countenance became instantly grave. "The ordering of the water-courses," said he, with a devout glance upward, "is known only to Him, and revealed according to His pleasure."

The solemnity with which these words were uttered quieted, if it did not appease Miss Penny's vexation. She was silent.

"And you see," explained Hexin, "Hit's me what gits the job, and hit's me what's answerable fur his pay."

"And that's fair!" Joyce declared.

This explanation did not impose upon Miss Penny, however; she knew that ultimately the diviner's fee must come out of her pocket, and she determined that she would not pay it unless water was found convenient.

"You see, ma'am," said the diviner, with a propitiating smile, "we kin seek within your limits, and if it's thar, it will be indicated; and if it ain't, why, ma'am, thar's no use to dig, onlest you want a *dry* well."

At this, everyone laughed except Miss Penny. Mrs. Joyce with a harsh cackle, Hexin with a wheezy chuckle, and Joyce with a loud, lingering "haw! haw!"

Yet, in spite of her annoyance, Miss Penny was interested in the proceedings.

The diviner fixed his hat upon his head, and grasping firmly in each hand a branch of the forked stick, with the straight end pointing upward, began walking slowly back and forth, within a space prescribed by Miss Penny herself.

"Ef the water ain't thar," remarked Hexin, parenthetically, "hit ain't no use, nohow; it'll *have* to be sarched for elsewhar."

The diviner did not speak; his lips were compressed, his face wore an intent expression; the veins on the back of his hand became swollen by the rigidity of his grasp, and the rod remained inflexibly upright.

Miss Penny, clearly perceiving that she was in the power of a faction, began to feel her heart sink. She kept her eyes fixed upon the diviner, who, sensible, perhaps, of some subtle influence in her gaze, suddenly glanced up and met her anxious look. As he did so, the rod in his hand wavered, turned, twisted, and actually *split* as the end pointed down between his feet.

He was standing a trifling distance from the spot Miss Penny had marked, and she sprang up, determined not to yield without a struggle; but Hexin allowed her no time to speak:

"How deep, Mem'ry? How deep?" he wheezed, excitedly.

The diviner, without replying, began slowly walking backward, counting as he went. When he had measured fifty-two paces, the rod suddenly reversed with such violence that it had nearly struck him in the face. He looked up at Miss Penny again, as he threw back his head, and said:

"Seein' is believin'."

"Hit's the gift o' the Lord!" Mrs. Joyce declared,

loudly. "Mem'ry ain't mo'n nineteen, but he's got the gift, sure!"

But Miss Penny was not ready to acknowledge herself convinced.

"Of course I expected to dig deep," said she, "on this rising ground; and if water is within fifty-two feet on *that* spot, it can be found anywhere within a reasonable circuit. I don't want any well dug *there*. I want it *here*!"

But speak as positively as she might, her four opposers were not to be induced to go "agin natur"; they shook their heads in solemn, obstinate denial.

"I *mought*," said Hexin, condescendingly, "I *mought* git my consent to dig and trust to luck, in case whar nobody could be found with the gift to trace water; but so long's my head's hot, I ain't a gwine to be sich a blazin' fool as to go agin luck by diggin' in one place, when the water's been spotted in another."

"Well, I wouldn't stand no sich resk," Joyce declared, with an air of proprietorship. "Tain't no manner *sense* to mark out a well thouten findin' the water *fust*, Miss Lankster."

"Nothin' *but* i'norance would undertake it," Mrs. Joyce remarked, loftily.

And by these two assertions Miss Penny might have understood that her hirelings had discussed her deficiencies, and had taken her under supervision; but she was not giving heed at that moment, she was debating with herself whether she should submit to dictation or struggle for the victory. The distance between the spot chosen by herself and that indicated by Memory Waits' rod, was not so great as to involve any material sacrifice of convenience, should she consent to have her well according to his dictum, rather than her own; but recognizing the principle involved, Miss Penny was loth to yield her point.

"Ef ye ain't goin' to dig 'cordin' to the water, Miss Lankster," wheezed Hexin, impatient at her silence, "hit ain't no use talkin' 'bout hit no mo'."

This was reducing the question to its exact limitations as Miss Penny was quick to perceive, and with her accustomed promptness of decision, she consented that

the well should be dug according to Memory Waits's indication.

Hexin had already stuck a stake in the spot where the diviner's rod had pointed, and the alacrity with which he proceeded to mark off the space for the well, consoled Miss Penny, in some measure for having to yield her preference; and for her more complete consolation, in the course of a week or ten days, the well was completed, and a good supply of good water secured.

Then Miss Penny, having first patched her gates and fences as best she could, at the time, built herself a barn; for though it might long go empty, she could not be content without this indispensable feature of a thrifty farm. It was a big barn that promised to be perfection some day; but incomplete and unpainted though it stood, it was a great satisfaction to its owner, and it had this advantage over the well, it was built exactly where she wanted it, with its door to the south.

When Miss Penny had built her barn, and had so far stocked her farm as was indispensable to the making of a crop, she found that she must content herself without furniture. She slept upon a cot, sat upon her trunk, and for a table made use of a barrel with two boards battered together and laid across the top: but she was not living in the present, and she felt no hardship. She had a good share of ingenuity, and some taste for decoration, which might have enabled her to relieve the barrenness of her habitation; but she had no time to exert these talents, for besides the fact that all her energies were directed to her out-door work, she had also to supplement the incapacity of her woman in the kitchen, who knew no more about cookery than Miss Penny herself did; but Mrs. Joyce's ignorance differed from Miss Penny's in that she was blissfully unconscious of it, and totally incapable of learning anything from failure, which was never the case with Miss Penny Lancaster. Mrs. Joyce far from resenting interference, received every suggestion with a calm indifference, and the remark:

"Well, for sure, your way ain't my way; but ef it suits *you*—"

Yet she continued to do her own way.

Her husband equally bent upon having his way in the fields, was less complaisant of speech. "You jest leave

me to plant them turnups and cabbages, Miss Lankster," he would say; "and you and Almirey mind the house. I'll put in a patch of wheat, and you'll see everything a workin' straight. Don't you take no consarn about the plough."

But Miss Penny insisted also upon a field of clover; her plan being, after a while, to make cheese in winter, and to sell milk, butter and curds, in summer, to the Briarville Hotel which already had a fair show of health-seekers all the year round. Miss Penny did not foresee that she would be to a great extent, the making of that hotel, but she was fain to hope that the Briarville Hotel might be the making of her.

Joyce planted the clover under protest. "I ain't never had no use," he grumbled to Almirey, "fur no woman follerin' up my plough. And as to clover, any caow kin git pickin's around, thouten that waste o' time and strength."

"And it's a flyin' in the face o' Providence to be plantin' for the future so *confident*," commented the doleful Almirey.

But Joyce had at least this merit, he was not lazy, and if the work of the farm was not always done according to Miss Penny's views, at least there was progress made as the months wore on.

Miss Penny's plan was to redeem the exhausted land by planting peas chiefly the first year, when the spring came around, with just so much corn as would save buying it; but Mr. Joyce planted cotton. Yet, as he knew this was in direct opposition to his employer's wishes, he kept his own counsel, and Miss Penny was none the wiser until the seed came up. For at that time she had her heart set upon a crop of vegetables whereby she hoped to defray part of the expenses of the coming year.

At the side of the house and beyond the cherry-trees, was a large garden in fairly good condition, but it was almost impossible to induce her one farm-hand to pay any attention to this branch of the business. He had hired to do farming, and not gardening, which he considered work for "women-critturs;" and he could not see, he could not be made to see, anything but waste of time and space in planting such vegetables as he had

never eaten. When Miss Penny recited the long list she meant to plant, he did not openly say her nay, but he was none the less determined to countenance no such folly; and Miss Penny dared not quarrel with him. Not that she was afraid of any man; but in that part of the country it was not easy to command labor. There were plenty of farmers' sons, indeed, to whom Miss Penny's wages would not have come amiss, but they too often preferred to leave undone at home, work they should have done, anxious rather to increase their already respectable knowledge of wood-craft by hunting "varmints" that infested the higher slopes. Miss Penny herself could wield a hoe to very good purpose, but her unaided strength was not equal to the undertaking of such a garden as she counted upon.

However, by dint of sore insistence, Mr. Joyce was induced to plough the ground, grumbling the while that he had too much work to do, to be throwing away his time on "gyarden foolishness." "Craps is *craps*," he maintained, to his sympathizing and acquiescent Almirey; "and Miss Lankster 'll find that out to reck'nin', ef she don't quit her onprincipled book-farmin'."

"Sartain!" responded Almirey. "It's you what is runnin' the business, and Miss Lankster ought to mind *her* business by not interferin'."

Satisfied that he had done more than should have been required of him, Joyce, when he had ploughed the garden, left Miss Penny to her own devices in getting it planted; he was entirely willing to consider the garden "*hern*," but the "crap" was "*hisn*," and *he* knew what he was about.

In her despair, Miss Penny appealed to Mrs. Joyce.

Mrs. Joyce suffered from chronic despondency; there were times when she felt free to declare that "thar warn't no use in nothin'," yet she could never be persuaded of the uselessness of having such a train to her calico skirts that every snag in her pathway took out a sample, until the edge was an unsightly fringe. She no more approved of the garden than did her husband, but she allowed herself to be persuaded to lend most unwilling and ineffectual aid, striking some reckless blows that annihilated more precious plants than noxious weeds, according herself frequent resting-spells, when

she would lean contemplatively on her hoe-handle, staring at nothing, unless Miss Penny passed within ear-shot, when she would grumble out the opinion that "hit warn't no use, nohow; folks about hyar didn't never bother to wrastle with weeds in gyarden patches; thar was allers mo'n enough to do, keepin' craps outen the grass."

Miss Penny, however, was not to be converted from the error of her ways by any amount of this indirect preaching; she had not slept upon a cot, sat upon her trunk, and eaten from a table improvised of a barrel and boards, to give up the struggle at the word of this lazy pessimist. She had taken hoe in hand with a will, and what her hand found to do, she did with her might, discovering thereby, to her astonishment and dismay, that the variety of weeds is greater, and their vitality more indestructible than it is possible to appreciate, without actual, experimental contact. Miss Penny, it may be remarked, by the way, struggled with the inveterate "pusley" three years before she learned its value in feeding swine. In the garden she spared herself no toil, trusting to the forlorn hope that by the time the work should become too heavy for her, some lad more industriously disposed than his fellows, might be found to "carry" the garden and peddle the vegetables.

CHAPTER XVII.

DISCOURAGEMENT.

BETRAYED by Joyce's scorn of gardening into the delusion that the corn and peas upon which she relied for store the coming winter, would receive due attention from him, Miss Penny took comparatively little thought about the crop of the farm proper, and it was late in April before it occurred to her to inspect her fields. So, one morning, when she tied on her big hat, and pulled on her heavy gloves, instead of betaking herself at once to the garden, she walked across the slope dedicated to the apple-trees, and reached that portion of her territory properly called the fields.

Before she came quite upon the furrows, she saw, with a thrill of intense satisfaction, a line of tender green tracing their course ; but a closer examination proved this not to be the green of corn or peas. Indeed—Miss Penny should have known that corn and peas at this time of the year ought to be making a greater show, but this was the first year of her planting, and in the multitude of her anxieties, many facts escaped her.

Miss Penny stooped down twice, and glanced uneasily up one furrow and down another before she could accept the testimony of her eyes. Then she bethought herself that she had heard Joyce's wife say to her spouse that she must have some cotton for her winter spinning, "seein' that sto' boughten stockings, and socks warn't no good." He was to be pardoned, Miss Penny thought, if he had dedicated a little strip in the field to Almirey's petition, for home-made hosiery. But the farther Miss Penny walked, the more and the more were the rows of cotton ; in fact, cotton covered all the land, even to the farthest limit of her fields, where Mr. Joyce stood, hoe in hand, addressing himself to the work of "bunching."

"Mr. Joyce," said Miss Penny, with restrained wrath, "what is this coming up in my furrows?"

Joyce's sallow, sun-burned face expanded in a broad grin. "Well now, Miss Lankster," he drawled, "you set yourself up fur a farmer and dunno cotton when you see it!"

"I *do* know cotton when I see it!" Miss Penny retorted, curtly. "But I am slow to believe my own eyes, for I expressly ordered you to put in a different crop. Where is that sack of peas I gave you to plant?"

Joyce's features took on an expression half-sullen, half-defiant, as he replied :

"Them peas was fairly got red of, you kin make shore, Miss Lankster. Almirey and me allowed thet thar was jest about ten times as much as thar was any sense in plantin'. I reckon I know what I'm 'bout when I undertake to do farming, and ef you *must* know, I passelled them peas out in small lots and made a even swop with defferent neighbors fur cotton-seed. Ef hit warn't fur *me*, Miss Lankster, I tell ye, *now*, ef hit warn't fur me, you'd be the redicule of the neighbor-

hood. I done mo' farmin' than ever you'll larn outen books, and thar ain't no sense in chunkin' away land jes to—"

"How much *have* you planted in cotton?" Miss Penny interrupted, shortly.

"Well—jest about as much as by right reason could be spared from corn," Mr. Joyce replied, with obtrusive self-gratulation. "A matter of ten acres, I reckon. That'll give you two acres in corn."

"Mr. Joyce," said Miss Penny, exasperated, "where am I to get corn this winter, to feed my stock?"

"A caow, and a calf, and a hawse, and a sow and pigs," said Joyce, composedly; "you kin count on about twenty-five bushels; and thar's allers corn to be bought."

"And I am to live on a farm of my own and *buy* corn!" cried Miss Penny with scorn.

"Well—now, Miss Lankster," said Joyce, persuasively, "don't let's you and me git riled with one 'nother. *I* got repitation to lose; you ain't got none, so to speak, as a farmer. Cotton's cotton; thar ain't no question 'bout that, and hit'll fetch hit's price."

"Oh, I dare say;" Miss Penny assented, ironically.

"Shore and sartain;" Joyce insisted, with consolatory emphasis. "I allow to make a quarter bale to the acre."

"About two bales and a half," said Miss Penny, who was a lightning calculator, "to be hauled and ginned; and packed and shipped, to say nothing of picking out."

"Well, to be shore," drawled Joyce, with mingled condescension and impatience, inexpressibly exasperating to the mistress of the soil, "you can't count of havin' the yield o' the yeth thouten *some* outlay. As to this cotton, ef I make the crap, I reckon I kin manage." And he addressed himself again to his hoe, with an air of finality.

Miss Penny, if she could have hoped for obedience, would have ordered every sprout of cotton ploughed up, instanter; but Joyce had her at his mercy, and she dared not trust herself to utter another word, or to stay a moment longer, lest she might do or say something rash.

Joyce chuckled to himself as he looked after her retreating figure, and before she was fairly out of sight, shouted to her :

“Say ; Miss Lankster ! Thar’s a good chance o’ peas sproutin’ up to the orchard corner ; ’bout an acre. You jest walk over thar and see fur yourself.”

But Miss Penny deigned no reply ; neither did she extend her walk in the direction named. She was in no mood to be soothed by a handful of peas ; she felt the necessity of working off her bottled wrath in order to think clearly. In the phraseology of the region where she had elected to live, she “pitched into” the garden and slaughtered the weeds with a fury that soon exhausted her strength without in any degree calming the turmoil of her thoughts.

Perhaps it was a fortunate feature in the case that having made a year’s contract with Joyce and his wife, she had no alternative but to acquiesce in the execrated cotton-crop ; on the other hand, however, it was exasperating to reflect that while she could not discharge him, he, having nothing to lose, might at any time break his contract.

Miss Penny could have wept tears of rage at finding herself outgeneralled by this shiftless incarnation of obstinacy, whose cotton crops, with all his boasted knowledge of farming, had not sufficed to save him from being sold out for taxes. She had chosen farming through the irresistible impulse of her strong and ineradicable passion for the rural life. In her early youth she had desired a farm of her own merely for the gratification of her propensity to dig in the dirt ; but with the passing years she had read, and observed, and reflected much, so that she had come to cherish a modest ambition to teach some useful lessons regarding the conduct of small farms. Her views as to her recognized vocation were not limited to the mere heaping of riches upon riches by means of what Mr. Joyce called the “yield o’ the yeth” ; she meant, indeed, to make her living by farming, and also to grow rich thereby, if so she might ; but what was to become of her hopes to teach small farmers the wisdom of having nothing to do with cotton, when she, the self-appointed prophet of the millennium of mixed provision

crops, was lending countenance, in her own despite, to the planting of cotton? Miss Penny, notwithstanding her strong practical turn, was enough of an enthusiast to feel like sitting in sack-cloth and ashes.

Metaphorically, she was sitting in sackcloth and ashes upon her own front steps, at sun set on that day of humiliation and defeat. It was the darkest hour of all the thirty-six years of Miss Penny's Pilgrimage.

She had discovered before now, that there were many more things necessary to the making of a good farmer than had been dreamed of in her philosophy, but until this day she had never suspected that there might be difficulties she could not cope with and especially had she never dreamed that her most formidable difficulty would present itself in the shape of a man of ignorance and prejudice.

So Miss Penny sat upon her piazza step, dejected and humiliated, while Joyce went whistling through *his* cotton crop. She had heard him say to Almirey when he came in at noon, that "he rekind by the time Miss Langster was a few years older she'd give hit up that thar was a heap she didn't know ef she was book-larnt."

Miss Penny had "given it up" already. In the days when she was pining to be the possessor of acres of her own, she had been accustomed to take refuge from her weariness of hope long deferred in a vision of the Wonder that should be in the way of an ideal farm. This vision came to her now, unbidden, it came not to soothe, but to mock her. She had closed her eyes; not because there was nothing beautiful in the sunset pageant illuminating the hills around her, but because she could take no pleasure in the sunset, for the bareness of her own little domain which she had begun, all at once, to despair of ever converting into the thriving, beautiful domain of her hopes, and her imagination.

And this despair had a deeper significance for Miss Penny than the mere negation of success in her chosen pursuit. Deep in her heart, she had, through all the years of her exile, clung to a purpose that lent its softening shade to her character. Though she had left her home without farewell, she had never hardened into forgetfulness of her sisters, and she had cherished the secret hope of making her own home the scene of reunion be-

tween herself and them. The thought that the failure of her farm might balk this hope of its fruition, was more than she could endure, and closing her eyes to keep back the sudden tears, she straightway saw a prolific apple-orchard on its grassy slope, an orchard now in bloom and now in bearing,—for the seasons changed swiftly in Miss Penny's vision. She saw her fields green with clover and with corn, with wheat, and oats, and rye. she saw the same fields yellow with ripened harvest, and countless golden pumpkins ready to be housed in her goodly barn for the sleek cattle ; she beheld a well-ordered dairy, a poultry-yard crowded with fowls, a row of bee-hives against the garden fence, and on the other side of that fence long lines of currants and raspberries with all the good old-fashioned herbs, and every vegetable in its season ; and here and there a border or a plot of all such gay flowers as could delight sight or smell—recalling that well-remembered garden of the Cross-roads in the pine-barrens, where sunflowers and prince's feather made glad her childish heart.

The vision made Miss Penny groan in spirit. It had lost the power to spur her energies to renewed exertions ; it could only fill her with an enervating despair, and she opened her eyes quickly, with the intuition that the sight of her little slip of yard in front, over-run by weeds and great clumps of Bouncing Bet, “unprofitably gay,” ought to act as a tonic. She opened her eyes and saw, upon the nearest hill-top, over which the road led to Briarville, a man, walking towards her house.

Miss Penny's gaze fixed itself upon this man, not with any feeling of interest or curiosity, but in merest apathy. Presently she saw that the pedestrian carried a valise slung over his shoulder by means of a cane.

The man came straight on with a swinging pace ; he was evidently a practiced walker, and he soon reached the gate that opened a few yards in front of Miss Penny's door. To her annoyance, he stopped there, and resting his arms atop, looked wistfully over the grass-grown and weedy yard at Miss Penny sitting on the steps.

Miss Penny sent him back a defiant glance. A man a-foot was, in the nature of things, a suspicious character in a neighborhood where most people found some

means of riding. But this man was tolerably well dressed, and he wore his plain, substantial, though rather thread-bare clothing with an air of respectability that rebuked suspicion. Nevertheless, despite the suggestion, intangible and fleeting, yet irresistible, of something familiar in his smile, for aught Miss Penny knew, this man might be a villain. She waited for him to speak; and presently he lifted his hat, showing his grizzled locks—for he was well past middle-age—and asked:

“Is this Miss Lancaster’s place?”

“Yes,” answered Miss Penny, ungraciously; “but I have no accommodations for travellers.” She had determined when she bought her farm, that living upon the roadside should not subject her to the incursions of strangers and pilgrims. But this stranger and pilgrim was not to be so easily rebuffed; he opened the gate and entered.

Miss Penny rose, summoning all her dignity in forbidding preparation of a request for a night’s lodging; but she was totally unprepared for the man’s next words.

“Why, Penthesilea?” he said, with a faint, sad smile, as he dropped his valise at her feet and held out his hands to her. “Don’t you know me, Penthesilea?”

Miss Penny staggered back, clasping her head in her two hands, instead of taking his. Her face wore a startled and shocked rather than a pleased expression.

“I do believe—it is—Uncle Joe?” she gasped.

Our estimate of people we know changes very materially as we advance from seventeen to thirty-seven, and Miss Penny was not sure that she regarded her uncle Joe with the same unquestioning faith and admiration she had entertained for him in her childhood. She used to resent bitterly her step-mother’s sour accusation that no man tied to a fiddle never was worth his salt, but she was now distinctly conscious of a secret satisfaction in the certainty that his valise could not possibly hold the companion of his idle hours.

All this flashed through Miss Penny’s thoughts yet left her time to rally instantly, with a sense of shame at her disloyalty to one, who, whatever his shortcomings were, had been to her a friend in need. She took his outstretched

hands, and gave him a kiss of welcome ; yet as she invited him in, she could not resist a sinking of heart, with certain vague forebodings—by which sensation she learned the encouraging fact that Mr. Joyce had not utterly crushed her. “E’en in our ashes live our wonted fires.”

She ushered her uncle in, little dreaming of the magnitude of the demand he was about to make upon her gratitude and unselfishness. She knew that he would probably consider her house his home, of right, for the rest of his days, and that with the best intentions in the world, he would worry her with advice and interference : but Gentleman Joe had a tale to unfold.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LEGACY.

GENTLEMAN JOE drew a long breath and rubbed his hands as he critically surveyed the bare and cheerless room into which his niece ushered him. “Is *this* the way you live, Penthesilea?” he asked, in a disappointed tone that vexed Miss Penny’s soul ; she remembered that the Cross-roads store had not been much better furnished.

“It is the way I live now,” said she. “I mean to live better after a while,” she added confidently. She was too much in the habit of looking upon herself as her own fate to say “I *hope*.”

“And you had some education,” said her uncle, musingly. “But I don’t know as that signifies,” he continued, with a sigh, “Education never kept me in luck, nor my brother Archie, neither.”

“Tell me about yourself, Uncle Joe,” asked Miss Penny, abruptly. “Where have you been all these years?” She looked at his clothes, trying to form some estimate of his worldly condition. She knew they were his best, for Gentleman Joe always went about in his best.

Her uncle, unconscious of this scrutiny, looked at his hands meditatively, and slowly smiled ; then with a

quick glance towards her as quickly averted, he replied :

"It would be easier to say where I ain't been. Out West, mostly. I've wandered around in Taxis, some, too. But I tell you, Penthesilea, I gave your step-mother a wide berth. You know she took the boys and went out to Taxis after your father died about a year. She's married again ; them masterful kind always *do*. And some of the boys married too. A managing crew, them boys ; they suit Taxis, and Taxis suits them. Be thankful they'll stay there. What's become of your sisters ?"

"I don't know," said Miss Penny, gloomily. "They married."

"Well, to be sure, Belle and Henrietta were handsome girls," mused Gentleman Joe. "I'll be bound they married well. And they forgot you, Penthesilea ?"

"I don't know ; I've slipped out of their lives for a time ; but when I've a fit home, I'll stretch out my hands to them."

"They may be dead," said her uncle, shaking his head.

"No, no," sighed Miss Penny. "I never have repented running away from that tavern life ; but I can't forget my sisters."

"Well, Penthesilea," said her uncle, philosophically, "life is full of disappointments, you know ; and you mightn't find your sisters to your notion after you'd hunted 'em up. I wouldn't count too much on 'em, if I was you. 'Pears like they've forgot."

"I left them," said Miss Penny, stoutly, "and it's for *me* to hunt *them* up, not for them to hunt me. But I'm not going to do it until I'm beyond suspicion of wanting help from them."

Her uncle looked at her some moments in meditative silence, before he remarked, admiringly :

"I always *did* say you were the best of the Lancaster bunch. How comes it you never married ? You must have had your chance ?"

Miss Penny blushed scarlet ; but she had no mind to tell her uncle the story of Luke Rosser.

"I never had any offer that pleased me," said she. "I like my own way. I always meant to have a farm

of my own, and to manage it according to my own notion."

And here Miss Penny, thinking of Mr. Joyce, sighed bitterly, but her uncle failed to remark the sigh.

"And this is your own farm?" he queried, eagerly; and added with a shade of disappointment, "It's very out of the way, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Miss Penny, briefly. She felt an instinctive shrinking from confiding her views to her shiftless uncle, and yet her heart smote her for her distrust.

"Well, to be sure," said Gentleman Joe, "the mind is its own place;" as Horace sings, *Cælum non animum mutant*, et cetera." By which bit of Latin Miss Penny knew that Gentleman Joe Lancaster was the same as of old, and she felt sure that sooner or later the fiddle would be forthcoming.

"It *might* be made a good farm," he continued; "but it appears to me rather a heavy lift for a woman alone, eh?"

"If you mean that as a hint for me to marry—you must have changed your views, Uncle Joe," said Miss Penny, a little coldly.

Mr. Joe Lancaster blushed vividly through his sun-burned sallowness; looked sheepish and guilty, and jerked out the words:

"I married—myself—out yonder," pointing over his shoulder with his thumb towards the vague and limitless West.

"*You!*" exclaimed Miss Penny; and she thought to herself, with mingled pity and amusement, that his wife must have been the chief of shrews.

"It was—very *unexpected*," said Mr. Lancaster, seriously, "you see it was thiser way, Penthesilea," he pursued eagerly and apologetically, and lapsing into more and more careless English as his earnestness waxed deeper; "*she* was left all alone; she hadn't any kin, at least not out there, *nobody* to look to, and that fragile and delicate as a flower, t'would a broke your heart to see her. She come from away up North—East they called it, out there, and she hadn't a cent upon earth, 'mong strangers, and I was in luck, that time; I'd made money and was makin' mo'; and I just hankered to take care of her. So we got married." His voice

trembled a little, but he hurried on : "It was the same to me as if an angel had come out of Heaven ; she warn't no common clay."

"And you married for—love!" Miss Penny exclaimed. She did not intend to be unfeeling.

Her uncle looked at her with a strange, unfathomable meaning in his eyes ; then he rose, and went to the open window, and stood there a long time silent, his gaze fixed upon the sky, rich with the tints of evening. His voice was husky when he spoke again : "I never asked her if she loved me ; 'twarn't to be expected."

A great pang shook Miss Penny's heart, as she caught in his words, and in his sorrowful humility, the suggestion of some dire domestic tragedy ; but with this pang there mingled a vague apprehension of trouble in store for herself. "And where is she now?" she felt impelled to ask.

"She is in Heaven, I *know*," answered Joe Lancaster, devoutly. "For she was perfection, and the most of good my money, when I had it, done me, was to keep her in comfort. But there's Marjorie ; Marjorie is just after her pattern."

"Marjorie?" Miss Penny repeated.

"Marjorie is the child," said Mr. Lancaster, turning away from the window, and fixing his eyes imploringly upon his niece. "She is all I have," he said in a choking voice.

In that one short, broken sentence, was revealed a wealth of affection, devoted, protecting, indulgent affection, that Miss Penny had missed out of her own life.

"And where is Marjorie?" she asked, softly, yet not without misgiving, despite her sympathy ; for Miss Penny, loving her independence, was afraid of the thrall-dom implied by the existence of this Majori

Mr. Lancaster picked up the empty nail-keg that had served him for a seat, and brought it to his niece's side, where he sat down, one leg stretched along the floor, the other curled under him, in most comfortless fashion.

"Penthesilea," he said, clasping his hands appealingly, "don't you remember one frosty, Christmas morning, when you came to me for shelter and help? You wanted me to adopt you, and I would a done it if I

could." As usual Mr. Joe, in his earnestness, was lapsing into careless English—"but I was going to rack and ruin in that mizable little Georgia Cross-roads sto'. It warn't no field for my talents, sure; and it warn't no place for you, I had made the decision to quit the concern, and seek my fortune. Well, I had my ups and downs. I meant always to do more for you; I didn't forget you, but I kinder *lost* you; and I—I married."

"Yes," Miss Penny assented, in the pause that followed.

"Well—that makes a difference," said Mr. Lancaster, with some uneasiness.

"I suppose it does," said Miss Penny.

"But *don't* go to think I forgot you, Penthesilea," he pleaded. "If I'd a continued prosperous, don't you believe but I should a hunted you up, all the same? But somehow, my luck turned; none o' my investments come to good. My wife died six years ago, and I seemed to lose my chances. She left me Marjorie, who warn't mo'n eight years old. I been doin' the best I could for her. I can't git my consent to part from her. I've hunted you up, Penthesilea, to ask you to—kinder adopt us both," Mr. Lancaster concluded, with a hesitating deprecatory smile, eying his niece furtively, in a vain endeavor, to read her inscrutable countenance.

But Miss Penny remaining long silent, Mr. Lancaster burst forth again, with keen feeling:

"You see I cannot part from the child! I cannot! Her mother's kin, up there at the North, offered to take her for their own, but her mother, with her dying breath, left her to me."

"You ought to consider her advantage," said Miss Penny, judiciously.

"I'll see 'em in perdition fust!" Mr. Lancaster averred, with apparent irrelevance. "But I'd give her to you, Penthesilea—so far forth as I could give her to any one; and you could so easy take us both. I'd do for you faithfully, Penthesilea; I'm equal to plenty of tip-top work yet—just fifty-seven. I'd make a fust-rate farm-boy," he urged, with a feeble attempt at playfulness. "I dare say by this time you've found out a woman can't manage a farm all alone by herself."

Miss Penny winced. This closing remark had struck home, so far as regarded that day's experience ; but Miss Penny was by no means ready to declare that she could not manage her farm unaided ; and she could see but little advantage to be gained in substituting the meddlesomeness of her uncle Joe for the meddlesomeness of her man Joyce. She was not to blame, if with a larger experience of life she could not, at the age of thirty-seven, see her "scatter-minded" kinsman with quite the same eyes of seventeen. Miss Penny the farmer rejected Mr. Joe Lancaster's proposition unconditionally ; but Miss Penny the woman felt her heart go out irresistibly to that motherless girl for whom he uttered his plea. She was not given to weak sentimentality, but brave, resolute, and independent though she was, she had learned, since the attainment of her long-fixed purpose to possess a farm of her own, that it is a fearful thing to live for one's self alone ; she had not been able, with all her courage, to escape that

"Vague sense of silence and horror and distance,
A strange sort of faint-footed fear"

which waits upon isolation. Yet Miss Penny trembled at the thought of so momentous an undertaking as the training of a young girl like Marjorie, the idol of a doting parent.

"How did you discover me, Uncle Joe?" she asked, while her swift thoughts outran the present and questioned the future as to the possibilities for regret and congratulation the possession of her uncle's daughter might involve.

"Discover you?" repeated Uncle Joe, with a chill at his heart. "You weren't hiding from your kith and kin, were you, Penthesilea?"

"No, no. But none of the rest have found me in all these years."

"Maybe they didn't let on about it," said Mr. Lancaster, shrewdly.

"How did you find me?" Miss Penny repeated, with a sense of bitterness in the thought that his necessity, not his regard, had spurred him to the search.

"Well—it was accident," said Mr. Joe.

Miss Penny stared.

"Accident," repeated Mr. Joe; "so to say. You don't take the Atlanta papers, eh, Penthesilea?"

"No," said Miss Penny, wearily; "I take only an agricultural journal."

"You might have *seen* something," proceeded Gentleman Joe, with an air of agreeable mystery, as he drew from his pocket a bulky bundle. "My—er—advertisement—hem! was in the *Constitution*, and—"

"You didn't advertise for me?" exclaimed Miss Penny.

"No; my business advertisement, I mean. Here is one of my programs."

"Programs?" repeated Miss Penny, mechanically.

"I had to change my name, sorter," Mr. Joe explained, "*Signor Lancaastro*. Hem!" And he proceeded to read, in a manner oddly mingled of vanity and deprecation, from the paper he had unfolded, his voice giving due emphasis and importance to the profusion of capitals:

SIGNOR LANCASTRO, PRESTIDIGATEUR.

INIMITABLE ENTERTAINMENT!

FEATS OF MAGIC!

WONDERFUL ILLUSIONS!

VENTRILOQUISM! MUSIC!

Miss Penny was speechless. In her childhood at Lancaster's Tavern, she had occasionally been thrown with the class of people who ministered in this way to the amusement of the public, and their forlorn and wandering existence had filled her with an infinite pity, even while she shrank from them. She could not reconcile herself to the idea that her uncle Joe had descended to such a calling.

He understood her silence. "You see," he explained, with a pathetic smile, "I've had to turn my talents to account. Lord, Penthesilea! all the Latin and Greek ever I learned ain't been so much good to me as the

sleight-o'-hand that seemed to come natural. And it was for the child."

"And *she*—what part did *she* take?" asked Miss Penny, aghast, a vision of a girl in gossamer capering on a tight-rope, rising in her fancy.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Joe, bouncing from his keg. "Do you suppose I let her go—go—go—before the public as a *show*?"

Miss Penny heaved a sigh of relief. "If that's all you can do" said she, with a touch of unconscious scorn—"tramping around the country playing tricks with hats, and handkerchiefs and rings." And Miss Penny recalled with a sort of contemptuous wonder at herself how proud she used to be of her uncle Joe's feats of legerdemain. "Oh, Uncle Joe, that you should come to this!" she almost groaned.

"I'd do anything for the child," said he, stoutly. "Except give her up to her Yankee kin. I—I—I can't bring myself to feel I'm bound to do that."

"And you take her around with you?"

"Not to my exhibitions—no!" said Gentleman Joe, magniloquently. "I ain't ashamed of any work I do for her—she's her mother's child—but I can't have her lookin' on. You needn't go to think she's contaminated. She's fourteen years old, and as sweet as a pink. I've taken care of Marjorie, and I've put her to school some; but it's time she had a steady home, and I had almost made up my mind to give her up to her kin when I come across Mrs. Braid."

"Mrs. Braid!" Miss Penny repeated. She had not thought of Mrs. Braid for years.

"She's in Atlanta, patching up her business a little. I thought once I'd consult her about Marjorie, when just by accident I found out 'bout you. For old sake's sake, Mrs. Braid give me and the child a room rent-free. Well, Marjorie she took cold with fever and sore throat, and I sent in a hurry for the first doctor that could be found; and, sure as you live, Penthesilea, it was Malcolm Griffiths, you know, used to be in Little Warrenton."

Miss Penny clasped her hands in sore dismay. She saw in her uncle's face that he had heard the story of Morrison Kendric's rescue and of Luke Rosser's tragedy.

“And *he* told me about you,” continued Mr. Lancaster, “how you saved the Yankee Colonel, and how that no ’count fellow got killed out o’ your way ; and I just said, a woman what’s got that pluck and that luck is the one to take Marjorie, and be a mother to her. And Dr. Griffith, he told me where you’d settled. It was the finger of Providence pointing out the way, and I just followed.”

There was a long silence. Miss Penny, too, thought she saw the finger of Providence, but whether it pointed the way of joy or sorrow, she was sorely in doubt, and her heart, between fear and hope, knocked at her side. When at last she spoke, it seemed to her not that she had made a decision, but that she had surrendered to inevitable destiny.

“It shall be as you wish, Uncle Joe,” she said, and sighed. What else could she say?

Mr. Lancaster blew his nose sonorously, and wiped his eyes, and squeezed his niece’s hands. No other reply was he capable of making for some moments.

“Where is Marjorie?” said Miss Penny. “The sooner you bring her the better.”

“She’s at Briarville Hotel. I didn’t care to bring her to an uncertain welcome, you see. But I’ll walk back to-morrow, and you shall have her before night. She’s an uncommonly nice little thing, Penthesilea ; it is unaccountable what a nice little thing she is, except that her mother was just as nice. And you are bound to like her, Penthesilea, you are just bound to like her.”

CHAPTER XIX.

MARJORIE.

MISS PENNY built no high hopes upon her uncle’s assurance of Marjorie’s perfections. She knew that she was taking a great risk, how great a risk she made no attempt to estimate ; she left that for the future to reveal. What most nearly concerned her now, was the inevitable increase of expenditure ; for she could not suppose that a man who tramped about the country with a

fiddle and a prestidigateur's "properties" could be possessed of any funds in hand.

"It will be necessary to buy some furniture, I suppose," said Miss Penny, partly in debate with herself, and partly by way of discovering her uncle's pecuniary resources ; but her uncle was silent.

"I will get you the money," said she, at last, with a sigh, for her funds were running low, and she had a dread of debt that a man might call morbid.

"All right ! I'll make the very best bargain for you I can, Penthesilea," said Gentleman Joe, cheerfully. He had money, quite a respectable little sum, but he did not see fit to confess this comfortable fact to his niece, who, for aught he knew, might have developed a grasping disposition in her single-handed struggle with the world ; and what was his he meant to keep for Marjorie ; that truly was none of Penthesilea's business, moreover the furniture, when bought, would be hers, and not his.

Miss Penny, in spite of her convictions as to the unremunerativeness of her uncle's "profession," felt disappointed and injured. She went out without another word and cooked supper, for Mrs Joyce had a convenient "misery" in her side which interfered with all exertion, but which did not prevent her eating heartily of the biscuit and bacon when the meal was served.

Mr. Joyce, who also shared this meal, failed to do it equal justice, for Gentleman Joe being of a social temperament, felt under obligation to entertain the company with stories of his adventures, at which Joyce stared, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, except when his faithful spouse nudged him with a reminder that "if he didn't look sharp he wouldn't get his share."

A rug and a blanket with an armful or two of hay was the best substitute for a bed Miss Penny could offer her kinsman, but he, relieved of his anxiety about a home for Marjorie, slept serenely.

Not so his niece. The future, with its tremendous possibilities, for weal or woe, in its connection with the unknown young girl whom on the morrow she was to take into her life, so weighed upon her imagination that she could not sleep. But when one has accepted the inevitable, regret is a folly, as Miss Penny very well knew, and with the dawn came the remembrance of that

promise about casting bread upon the waters, and she arose in better hopes and stouter courage.

Her first step was to inform Mr. and Mrs. Joyce of the contemplated change in her domestic arrangements. She fully expected them to break out in open rebellion, and she wished to have the struggle over with as soon as might be. She was rather disagreeably surprised at the alacrity with which they bestirred themselves to make such preparation as was needful, inasmuch as it conveyed to her mind the mortifying suspicion that the presence of a man in her affairs had inspired this prompt response to her authority. Mrs. Joyce cooked breakfast without undue delay, and Mr. Joyce, of his own accord, went out and saddled "our sawrill," as he persisted in designating Miss Penny's one horse; but both he and his wife lingered to see Mr. Joe Lancaster "fairly started," watching him until he rode over the hill and out of sight, Joyce leaning over the gate, and his wife supporting her limp and languid length against the door-post. It was plain that these two regarded the new-comer with an admiring reverence and interest they did not feel for their employer.

"Tell yer what, Miss Lankster," said Joyce, as he came back to the house, "hit's the fust time ever I come in actual cawntact of a man what has been in a land whar gold is dug. I'd 'low, now, he's grabbled a power o' the metal outen them Western hills in less time and less labor than we'll grabble a livin' outen this land."

"I know nothing about it," said Miss Penny, shortly, as she walked off to her garden, where she busied her hands pulling up weeds, and her head devising plans for the future.

Joyce watched her as she went with sullen disapproval, remarking to his wife:

"Miss Lankster can't fool *me*. Ef he's been whar he says he's been, stands to reason he *must* a dug up *some* gold, or *she* wouldn't make him so free and welcome. 'Tain't in natur'."

"Diggin' gold is better'n hoein' cotton and corn," said Almirey, despondently.

"Sure hit is! I've a good notion to try hit, myself. We kin go West as easy as go East; and all we'll need will be a shovel and a skillet."

“*And* a bottle o’ medicine,” supplemented Mrs. Joyce, with a doleful emphasis ; and thus they continued, while their work waited for them. Could Miss Penny but have known it, her uncle’s influence with these two, so far as concerned what they had to do with her affairs, was not likely to surpass her own.

Just before sundown, Mr. Joe Lancaster returned with Marjorie, in a little old rattling topless buggy, drawn by a gaunt, big-boned horse. The crazy vehicle was cumbered by two small trunks, and a large wooden box padlocked. Behind the buggy, followed a boy mounted on Miss Penny’s sorrel. Manifestly this boy came for the purpose of taking the buggy and the other horse back on the morrow.

Now it was not more than a mile to the town, and as Miss Penny thought nothing of such a walk for herself, she had been a little disposed to demur to her uncle’s taking the sorrel ; but he had explained that Marjorie was not strong, and could not stand fatigue. Miss Penny had expected, therefore, that the girl would ride behind Mr. Joe Lancaster on horseback, while their baggage could come with the little cot and mattress, and three chairs she had felt compelled to buy. Secretly she raged against her uncle for indulging in the luxury of a buggy. Necessary expenditure she did not begrudge, however she might sigh over her shrinking purse, but unnecessary expenditure, were it never so little, fretted her. Mr. Joe, however, who could not divine his niece’s feelings, seeing that he prided himself upon having planned his little expedition with exemplary forethought and management, lifted Marjorie out, and presented her with a glowing pride that quite transfigured his worn and melancholy visage.

To say that Miss Penny was disappointed, would be but a mild expression for the consternation that seized her at the sight of this dainty, fragile child. And yet she had done her best to fortify herself against disappointment ; she had warned herself not to expect a girl after her own heart. Marjorie, she had made sure, could not be other than an untamed child of the plains, an old man’s wilful, spoiled darling, unmanageable, and capable of giving her a world of trouble, but a robust, rustic withal, fitted to make part and parcel of the farm

life, to rise at cock-crow, to feed the hens, to brave the sun and wind, to look after the dairy, and if need were, to milk the cows, to harness the horse, and even to help gather the crop. But this Marjorie was a slight, delicate child of fourteen, with curling, red-brown hair, and large brown eyes, and a face like a flower. Miss Penny was so overwhelmed by a sense of the utter uselessness of this delicate beauty in such a home as hers that no word of welcome came to her lips. She took Marjorie's hand and kissed her, with a feeling akin to awe, as though she kissed a creature from another sphere, but she did not speak.

"What do you think of my girl, Penthesilea, eh? What do you think of her?" Mr. Joe Lancaster asked, eagerly, rubbing his hands, and looking at Marjorie with his head now on this side, now on that.

"She is not like you," said Miss Penny, bluntly. "She is not the least bit like a Lancaster."

"Well, no," said Mr. Joe, with a crestfallen look. "I *told* you she is like her mother. Her mother had just such eyes and hair, and the same sort of face."

"I'm afraid she'll find this too rough a home," said Miss Penny, leading the way to the house.

"I'll fix it up a bit," said Mr. Joe Lancaster, complacently. "And Marjorie has a good knack at beautifying, her mother's knack. Think you'll like it, eh, Marjorie?" he asked, anxiously.

They were now in the bare and comfortless room where Miss Penny kept her crockery and ate her meals. Marjorie's glance travelled around this cheerless room, and then rested on old Joe Lancaster's expectant face with a smile of childlike content.

"I could be satisfied anywhere with a home and *you*, Daddy Joe," she made reply; and the old man put his arms around her and kissed her, saying, with a sigh:

"You are powerful like your mother, child, powerful; you'll seem to be pleased, if you ain't."

"But I *am* pleased," Marjorie insisted, in her soft voice, and with an appealing look at Miss Penny.

But Miss Penny did not respond. Her heart was swelling with jealous resentment. Not that she objected to occupying the second place in her uncle Joe's affections; she had too long outgrown the blind devotion

with which she once regarded this favorite relative,—but her little farm was all her own, crude and rough though it was, as yet, and it vexed her inmost soul to have these two infringe upon her sacred possession with hints of plans in which she seemed to be ignored.

“I should have things different if I could afford it,” said she, curtly, as she went away to have the trunks brought in.

“Yes ; I’ll make it comfortable for you, Marjorie, be sure of that,” said Mr. Joe, in blissful ignorance of Miss Penny’s resentment, and innocent of all intention of infringing upon her rights. “I always was handy about a house,” he continued, as he walked up and down the little room, rubbing his hands. “In the way of fixing up shelves and the like, I’m not to be beat. You shall have all the flowers you want, too, and Penthesilea will thank her stars that ever we came.”

“I hope so,” sighed Marjorie. Miss Penny’s welcome had not cheered her.

Meantime, Miss Penny was very busy. She had sent the boy back with the horse and buggy, and had put the sorrel in the stable and fed him, knowing the while, that she would have supper to cook, for Mrs. Joyce’s misery had gone to that ailing woman’s head. It seemed out of the question that Marjorie should lend a helping hand in Miss Penny’s life, for even if her uncle Joe were willing that the child should work—which Miss Penny doubted—what work could so dainty and delicate a creature do ?

“Pity but her mother’s kin had her in charge,” Miss Penny lamented to herself, little foreseeing that a day would come when the thought of giving her up to her mother’s kin would be as bitter to herself as to her uncle Joe. “It’s going to be a mill-stone around my neck to drag me down,” she sighed.

She began to feel the weight of the mill-stone as soon as she questioned her uncle Joe about his purchases. This she did immediately after supper, while Mrs. Joyce washed the dishes, and detailed her symptoms, and the unavailingness of that last mixture to her sympathizing spouse. Miss Penny knew that she would have no time on the morrow to talk to Mr. Joe ; and, besides, she had an uncomfortable suspicion that she

should not approve what he had done, and she was the more anxious, therefore, to know the worst.

"I suppose," said she, after vainly waiting for her uncle to make report of his shopping. "I suppose that the things you bought this morning will be sent to-morrow?"

"Yes, oh yes; I ordered them cyarted out *early*." Mr. Joe's emphasis on the word 'early' seemed to arrogate to himself great merit in his management. "You'll have to make out as best you can until then, Marjorie," he added.

This parental solicitude fretted Miss Penny: was Marjorie's comfort to be the only consideration henceforth?

"But you brought the bills with you! Receipted, of course?" she asked, impatiently.

"Well—no," he answered, slowly. "You see, I augmented your list, Penthesilea, *had to do it*," he emphasized, perceiving her dismay. "You made it in such a hurry. Fust place, I got a mirror for Marjorie, and instead of a cot, a reg'lar bedstead, a *small* bedstead, you know. *I* can dispense with such, myself, but she can't."

"Oh, Daddy Joe!" sighed Marjorie, reproachfully.

Vexed as Miss Penny was with her uncle, it fretted her yet the more to hear Marjorie give him the appellation of Daddy Joe. This was no time, however, to express her disapproval.

"What did you do with the money?" she asked, restraining her irritation as best she could.

"Oh, I made it go as far as 'twould," replied Mr. Lancaster. "I had to pay the buggy-hire, you know, for of course they wouldn't trust a stranger."

"Oh, Daddy Joe?" interrupted Marjorie, again. "I could have walked."

"No, you *couldn't*, Marjorie," Mr. Joe answered fretfully. "You don't know what you're talking about. And I warn't going to let you, nohow."

"She might have ridden behind you on the sorrel," Miss Penny could not resist saying.

"'Twould a tired her," said Mr. Joe, with the tone and air of dismissing that point. "So, I paid the buggy-hire, and so far forth as 'twould pay the other

things, I *paid*. It's credited in the bill; and the rest that's due—well, you'll have to settle with the man that cyarts them. I arranged for that. He'll have authority to collect, and all you'll have to do will be to *pay*."

"Oh, yes!" said Miss Penny, dryly.

"Don't worry 'bout it, Penthesilea," her uncle entreated, deprecatingly. "It's all fust-class, and will count as *property*."

"I could have done without such property, for the present," said Miss Penny.

"But Marjorie *couldn't*!" her uncle declared, as if that settled the question; but he added, tremulously, "I'm bound to do the best I honestly can by the child. You see I promised her mother."

"If you call this honest"—rose to Miss Penny's lips, but she checked the words before they were uttered.

"I am so sorry!" murmured Marjorie.

"Now, now, honey, don't you worry," entreated Mr. Lancaster, laying his hands on the girl's head. "Penthesilea is *bound* to get on, fix it how you may. She'll have to exercise management, maybe—"

"Yes," Miss Penny assented, "that is very evident. ("Between this doting old man, and this spoiled child, Heaven help my farm and me!" she thought.) "I'm of the opinion that Marjorie would be much better off with her mother's people," she said, with decision.

"Now, don't say that, Penthesilea, now *don't*!" whimpered Mr. Joe. "Her mother was willing for me to keep her, and I *can't* give her up. You don't want to leave me, *do* you, Marjorie?"

"No, Daddy Joe," said Marjorie, pulling his shaggy head down to give him a kiss. "I want to stay with you always."

"She'll have to put up with hardships and privations," said Miss Penny. "I get up with the dawn myself, and go to work; and I go to bed early to save lights. It's no easy life, but it suits *me*, and I can't change it to suit others. So Marjorie will have to do pretty much as I do. I'm going to bed now. There's the same blanket and rug you had last night, Uncle Joe; it's the best I can do for you; and I'll make Marjorie as comfortable as I can!"

CHAPTER XX.

FIRST FRUITS.

Miss PENNY pointed out to Marjorie the improvised bed upon which she was to sleep, without apology for its poor comfort ; but she did not immediately betake herself to her own hard couch ; more tired in spirit than in body, she sat by the window, striving to calm her vexed thoughts. There was no light in the room, save what came from the stars, and no sound, until a soft voice broke the silence : how strangely soft and sweet it sounded, in Miss Penny's unaccustomed ears !

"I am so sorry !" said Marjorie. "I wish you would let me tell you ?"

And then a long-drawn sigh.

But Miss Penny was in no mood to be soothed or flattered ; she maintained an obdurate silence, gazing in bitterness of heart upon *her* fields, where Mr. Joyce's cotton was growing in the moist stillness ; and Marjorie, shy and timid, sat up in bed and gazed at her.

She did not resent Miss Penny's coldness, she did not even feel injured by it. Her unselfish heart ached with a vague sense of having been the cause of trouble, until, at last, her desire to comfort overcame her timidity. She rose, and went to Miss Penny's side, saying again, in those soft, low tones :

"I am so sorry ! I do not mean to be a trouble to you ; in some things I might be a help."

Miss Penny turned quickly ; the child had helped her already. This tender, living creature, this loving human heart, was it not better worth her love and cherishing than all her fields ? She began to understand in a measure, how it was that her uncle Joe could not yield this child to her mother's kindred ; and a strange fear, like a prophecy, crept suddenly to Miss Penny's heart, a fear that she too might grow to love Marjorie so well that to part from her would be agony. The thought

made her brusque. "I don't know," she said, uneasily; "there doesn't seem to be anything you *can* do."

"Try me," urged Marjorie. "Try me, to-morrow! And, please—what am I to call you?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Miss Penny, with embarrassment. "You can call me what you like; but I wish—I wish you wouldn't call my uncle 'Daddy Joe'. It doesn't sound right to me."

"I've always called him so," said Marjorie, "and he likes it. Almost the first thing I can remember is being carried on his shoulder, and learning to say 'Daddy Joe'."

Miss Penny did not insist. "Did he name you Marjorie?" she asked. It was not the kind of name she would have expected her uncle Joe to choose.

"No; it was my mother named me her mother's name," said the girl, softly.

"Well, I like it!" said Miss Penny. "It suits with a farm, and it seems to be the only thing about you that does suit with a farm." She didn't mean to be discouraging; but she could not expect such a girl as this to be anything more than an ornament; and according to her views, it was not ornament that her farm stood most in need of at present.

"I'll try my very best to learn," said Marjorie, with pathetic earnestness.

"Well, go to bed," Miss Penny commanded, expressing the depth of the interest she was beginning to feel in this new-comer by using authority. "You will take cold."

But Marjorie only drew nearer to Miss Penny. "There is something else you must let me say," she whispered, timidly. "I'm afraid my Daddy Joe—is a very poor manager. You will *have* to manage—"

"Yes, I dare say," Miss Penny admitted, briefly.

"But he tries his best," faltered Marjorie; "and it isn't because I do not love him that I tell you this."

"I know, I know," said Miss Penny, a little impatiently, for it irked her to remember her uncle Joe's great lack; then, vexed with herself, she put her arms around Marjorie and kissed her, condemning herself the while; the girl got coddling enough, she thought, from that fond and foolish old man. "There, Marjorie," she

said, withdrawing her arms, "go to bed and go to sleep."

But Marjorie, speaking from a full heart, could not stay her words.

"And you see—I love my daddy!" she went on impetuously; "for all he doesn't know how to manage. It is mostly because he loves me so that he—he doesn't consider. He means to do the best for me. But sometimes—" and the child clasped her hands above her heart, as she caught her breath sharply—"I feel the need of some one that knows better than he can. I suppose I miss my mother, I was so little when she died. *Let me be of use to you,*" she pleaded; "so that you may *need me.*"

"Yes, Marjorie, yes," said Miss Penny, glad of the darkness that hid her agitation. "I am obliged to work hard, you see, and to live hard; but as long as you can stand it, you are welcome and I can't sit up all night to talk. Go to bed, child."

Marjorie sighed; but Miss Penny rose up from the window, lighter-hearted, for she was asking herself the question: "Why should I not cherish this child, frail, little useless creature though she seems to be, just as some women take to canary birds?"

Of a certainty it did not appear that Marjorie would be any more in the way of the farm than a pet bird: it was her Uncle Joe that made her uneasy.

Miss Penny rose earlier than her wont the next morning, and went to work in the garden, for nothing but work would keep down the weeds, and there was no evidence that two more to feed meant even one more to work. She had left Marjorie asleep, which in Miss Penny's estimation was just the right thing to do, she having accepted the fact quite as decidedly as her uncle Joe, that Marjorie was not made for toil; but after an hour's diligent hoeing that made her hungry, she was provoked when she turned her face toward the house, to see her uncle Joe basking in the sunshine.

"There are weeds enough out here," Miss Penny said aloud, in her exasperation, "if he was minded to go to work; but I can't order him about." Therefore Miss Penny wisely turned her back.

When, after an hour or two of hard work, she went

into the house, she saw at once that defter hands than Mrs. Joyce's had made things tidy ; and there stood Marjorie, sweet as a flower, and ready with a smile to take Miss Penny's big hat, and her coarse leather gloves. It was Marjorie, too, that helped to arrange the furniture when it came, finding pleasant words to say the while.

From that day Marjorie's reign began ; and Miss Penny soon made the surprising discovery that the end and aim of all her craving to possess a farm of her own, was to secure a home for this gentle, dainty creature, who, though she now and then met with ignominious failure in her attempts to coax easy-going old Joe Lancaster out of some objectionable whim, found no difficulty in establishing an absolute sway over his independent niece.

For Marjorie speedily found enough to do. Too fragile for that outdoor work Miss Penny loved, she busied herself about all those household duties for which Mrs. Joyce had no inclination, and Miss Penny no time.

But Gentleman Joe was very slow in discovering any useful post for him to fill. He occupied his time chiefly in exploring the farm, for the sole purpose, apparently, of revealing to his niece all the bad points and disadvantages of her purchase, always with the serenest good-will imaginable. In the evening he fiddled, to the infinite repose of Mrs. Joyce's mind and body. "Fiddlin'," said she, "did make doin' nothin' 'pear to come so easy."

The Joyces, man and wife had soon made up their minds that Mr. Lancaster had no money ; and they speculated freely in private as to how long "Miss Lancaster" would put up with these impecunious relations. "Fur she's got a skinned eye after the dimes," said Joyce.

"And she air that onrestless what she can't stand to see nobody stop to ketch breath," said Almirey ; "and hit 'pears to me he's ketchin' breath nigh 'bout all day."

"I ain't complainin' that he's any way slack o' knowledge, nor pertickler sca'ce about partin' with it onde-manded," remarked Mr. Joyce who resented the floods of advice Miss Penny's uncle poured upon him ; "but

if ever he had any money hit must a dreened away from him *somehow*. He don't 'pear to have no grip on nothin'."

"Exceptin' of that fiddle?" said Almirey, with admiration unfeigned. "I been athinking how he *mought* mek a liddle money fiddlin' in Dunstaby's saloon."

This idea so possessed Almirey's imagination that she ventured one evening, as Gentleman Joe sat fiddling in the dusk, to give emphatic expression thereto.

The rapt musician instantly arrested his bow-arm with an air of serious consideration; whereupon Marjorie went to him, and putting her arms around his neck, said softly:

"I don't want you *ever* to do that, please Daddy Joe!"

"Marjorie," said Miss Penny, afterwards, when they were alone, "do you think my uncle capable of following that lazy woman's suggestion?"

Marjorie was slow to answer. She looked at Miss Penny beseechingly, blushed, turned away, and said, with a long-drawn sigh, "I hope not!"

"As if there was not enough work to be done!" said Miss Penny, with sore indignation.

However, as Miss Penny's crops grew in the sunshine and the showers, and the garden began to repay her labor, Mr. Joe awoke to the perception that this department of the business demanded his talents and attention.

"There's more than enough, Penthesilea," said he, "for family consumption; and if you had a cyart, it would pay to take these vegetables to town."

"I suppose it would," Miss Penny admitted with secret uneasiness, for she had by no means desired to have her uncle Joe take part in this branch of the business: but if he could have felt disposed to slaughter the weeds, how welcome would have been his aid!

"Couldn't you afford to hire a cyart, Penthesilea?" he urged, impatiently. "It's a sheer waste, more vegetables than we want."

"I'll manage," said Miss Penny, briefly.

"Then I'll help you gather the vegetables this evening, and get ready for market, if you'll get the cyart tomorrow," said Mr. Joe, with what he felt to be commendable alacrity.

"Very well," his niece replied, but without enthusiasm. She had made up her mind that she herself, and not her uncle Joe, must peddle those vegetables.

It did not escape Miss Penny that Marjorie showed marked signs of uneasiness at this conversation. The child followed them into the garden, when they went to the work of gathering the vegetables, to the manifest annoyance of Mr. Lancaster, who said to her, fretfully:

"Now, Marjorie, this is no work for you."

But Marjorie lingered, hovering always near Miss Penny; and when they were out of sight and out of hearing of Mr. Joe, she exclaimed, abruptly:

"I wish I was a boy!"

"Why do you wish that?" said Miss Penny, ill-pleased. "I like you best as you are; boys would be in mischief."

"But I wouldn't be that kind of a boy; I would be useful; and I would sell your vegetables."

"I can sell them myself, Marjorie," said Miss Penny, with decision.

"Is that what you are going to do?" returned Marjorie, in a tone of unmistakable relief. "I was afraid—"

"Afraid?" said Miss Penny, seeing that she hesitated.

"Oh, *don't* let Daddy Joe; He *can't* take care of money;" said Marjorie, flushing crimson. "He means no wrong; but he *can't*."

"Does he—*drink*?" said Miss Penny, with tactless straightforwardness, not meaning to wound; but she thought it behooved her to know.

"Oh, no, no, no!" cried Marjorie, with the first sign of anger Miss Penny had ever seen her exhibit. "Oh, how *can* you think that? My dear Daddy Joe! Only—he makes away with it, somehow."

"Oh!" said Miss Penny, briefly. She could not suggest that possibly he gambled.

"If I should die," faltered Marjorie, "be good to him; he means no wrong; but—don't trust business to him."

"I mean to manage my own business, always," said Miss Penny, dryly.

In pursuance of this purpose, she rose long before her usual hour, and having made a hasty meal of the remnants of last night's supper, she saddled the sorrel, lashed the two baskets of vegetables firmly together,

and slung them across the horse. Thus equipped, she started for town before Mrs. Joyce had yet made her appearance, and while her uncle Joe was still snoring. The bell had not yet rung for breakfast when she rode up to the Briarville hotel.

Unabashed by the sly jokes her early advent inspired, Miss Penny sat upon her raw-boned sorrel, her short skirts tucked about her feet, her broad hat dipping and ducking as her head bobbed up and down, while she triumphantly exhibited the produce of her own soil. At last she was upon the threshold of her hopes, and neither the remembrance of her uncle Joe, hanging a useless idler upon her bounty, nor the thoughts of Mr. Joyce planting cotton where she had meant to have corn, could dull her keen satisfaction in the five dollars she held in her hand, when her vegetables were sold. She had over and over again earned larger sums, but never a cent, until now, by "the yield o' the yeth," and Miss Penny determined that these five dollars, the first fruits of her industry, should be sacred to her idol, the farm—every cent of it should go towards paying for some needed improvement. And as she rode homeward, forgetting that trite fable of the milkmaid, she pleased herself building air-castles.

Five dollars a day—perhaps not that much every day, to be on the safe side in her calculations—but say four dollars, or even three; that would be eighteen dollars a week, perhaps twenty-one dollars, for on Saturday she could sell for Sunday, and four times twenty-one would be eighty-four dollars in a month! From the garden alone!

Miss Penny whipped the sorrel and made him gallop; she was eager to be at those weeds. For she had made some little delay in the town, trying to learn the needs of the people in regard to garden produce, and she had some indications that Briarville was inclined to neglect the cultivation of the summer garden for the summer boarder. The far-away Southern coast and the malarial districts were beginning to discover the town, and Miss Penny felt that the future of her farm was assured; it was growing its last cotton-stalk this summer; and she gave her horse a vicious tug, as though he had been that animal Joyce.

The sorrel was a patient creature, but Joyce himself could not have given a more resentful plunge, or achieved a more prompt revenge. The saddle girth broke, and Miss Penny was landed violently in the middle of the road, covered with dust, and not a little bruised and shaken; and the indignant sorrel trotted remorselessly away.

Miss Penny knew that he would go straight to his stable; and there was she, more than half-a-mile from home, and that saddle and both baskets to carry. With unspoken maledictions of the feminine gender, she gathered herself and her belongings together, and trudged along the hot and dusty road.

It was near noon when she came in sight of her gate, where stood the sorrel, quiet as a lamb, beside Mrs. Joyce, who was supporting her failing strength against the post, while she stared into the sunshine, indolently awaiting the sequel of the horse's riderless arrival.

"Land sakes! if ye ain't a sight toe behole!" was her mirthless comment, as Miss Penny, under the burden of the saddle and the baskets, sat herself down on the edge of the gulley that ran between the road and the fence. "I jest a been wonderin' whether ye'd be comin' along, or if yo' brains was busted out, side of the road."

"And there I might have *staid*," said Miss Penny, indignantly, "for any trouble to you."

"Well, sho' and sartain," said Mrs. Joyce, with serene composure, "there'd been a lumping of the doctor's visit; you could a had him by wholesale, I suppose. I been a-watchin', *and* a-watchin', which hit is about all I *kin* do, fur somebody to go after the doctor, fur that gal, she's done tuk down suddin *and* speechless." This information Mrs. Joyce delivered with immense satisfaction.

Miss Penny staggered up from her seat on the edge of the gulley, feeling as though she had heard the words in a dream. "*Marjorie?*" said she.

"Hit's a fact!" Mrs. Joyce declared, with increasing satisfaction. "She never eat one mouthful fur breakfast, and all of a suddin, 'bout an hour ago, standin' by the churn, she jest keeled right over, dead-like. I been

here a-watchin' fur you, ever since. Mr. Lankster—hit do 'pear like he's lost what little gumption he ever did have. I tuk him half a bottle o' Cousin 'Liza Hexin's mixtur, but he wouldn't let a drap down her ; hot water and mustard is all *he* knowed about."

Miss Penny turned abruptly and jerked open the gate, and as she hurried up the path, Mrs. Joyce called to her loudly :

"I say ! Miss Lankster ! *He's* jest cawntinually lamenting he ain't give her to her ma's rich kin up North ; and I sesso, too, if she's *got* any rich kin. He's about the *porest chance* hisself, ever I see. 'Thouten any dependence on good physic, how's that gal goin' to mend up ? I say ! Miss Lankster ! Who's goin' fur the doctor ?"

But Miss Penny was out of hearing.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. JOE WRITES A LETTER.

IN painful confusion of thought and feeling, Miss Penny hastened to the room she and Marjorie occupied together. The remembrance of the child's speech the evening before—"If I should die, be kind to Daddy Joe"—chilled her like a fearful prophecy, and the bitter, unbidden thought would arise, "Wherefore should this young life be taken, and the other spared?"

For Miss Penny's intense affections had begun to wind themselves about Marjorie, so that her anxiety seemed to her a new, strange acquaintance, and yet an old familiar friend ; a something dear and dread she had known already, in some previous state of existence, and that had waited all these years to oppress her with a keener force, a deeper significance. Vaguely she recalled that just such motherly yearning had possessed her—only in a less degree—when she attended upon the young stranger, lying ill in the cheerless tavern of her childhood. This remembrance flitted like a ghost

through her brain, for she had long ago resigned Morrison Kenric to oblivion.

One faint hope Miss Penny clung to, the hope that Mrs. Joyce might have exaggerated Marjorie's condition ; but this hope vanished the moment she entered the room where Marjorie lay : the girl was in a stupor, and a burning fever consumed her.

Mr. Lancaster was walking up and down the room, wringing his hands with cries and groans that became articulate speech the moment he caught sight of his niece. "She is going to die ! She is going to die !" he wailed. " It's a visitation of the Lord ! It is my punishment ! I ought to have given her up to her mother's kindred, but I couldn't ! She was all that was left me of her mother, and her mother was my wife ; and the Lord took her away from me, and now He is going to take Marjorie ! Oh, Penthesilea, what shall I do ? "

" Hush for Heaven's sake, and go for the doctor, " said Miss Penny, not meaning to be harsh ; but she was frightened, for with all her devotion as nurse, she knew very little about illness.

" You've got no feeling, Penthesilea, " said Uncle Joe, with sorrowful resentment.

" I'm obliged to have common-sense, " replied Miss Penny. " Tears and lamentations will do no good. Take the horse and ride for the doctor. "

" And leave her ? " Mr. Lancaster almost shrieked. " Oh, I can't I can't ! She might die, and I away. Send Joyce, send Mrs. Joyce. Oh, don't ask me. "

Miss Penny went out desperately, in search of Joyce, who she knew was in the fields, and out of hearing ; but as she came opposite her front door, she saw a man standing by the gate and listening with rapt attention to Mrs. Joyce, who held the sorrel by the bridle and eagerly detailed the particulars of Marjorie's sudden illness, with comments on Mr. Lancaster's stupidity in not giving the sufferer " Cousin Liza Hexin's mixtur. " For though it never done *me* no good, it *mought* a-holped *her*, " said Almirey.

Miss Penny rushed breathless upon these two, and recognized Memory Waits, who took off his hat and greeted her with solemn respect, as one under the visitation of Providence.

"Oh, I am thankful to see you!" Miss Penny exclaimed. "For the love of Heaven, help us! We need a doctor here, as quick as you can bring him."

"Mem'ry has got orders to find water to Hilton's Fork; he told me so," said Mrs. Joyce, with a sort of pessimistic exultation; but Memory had already mounted Miss Penny's horse.

"I don't need no saddle," he said. "That purty little thing! I saw her at preachin' last Sunday, and she looked like an angel out o' Heaven. It is the hand o' Providence, Miss Lankster. He sent me this way to do your bidding. By the blessin' of the Lord, I'll bring the doctor."

"Stay a moment," said Miss Penny. "You must bring some ice too." And she took from her pocket some of that dedicated money she had received for her vegetables. Miss Penny was human, and even in this crisis, she felt a momentary pang at the certainty that not one cent of the proceeds of her garden would go to the benefit of the farm; but she instantly, and with anger against herself, thrust aside all thought about expense, and went in to devote herself to Marjorie.

In about an hour Memory Waits returned with the ice, and reported that the doctor would follow immediately. "A bran new man, Miss Lancaster, what has just stuck out his shingle, and was a-settin' in his office a-waitin'. He seemed mightily interested, and he told me to gallop ahead with the ice, and he's a comin', fo' shortly."

"And like as not, he don't know nothin' when he gits here, *them new doctors*," said the comforting Almirey. "Mem'ry, ye got the gift o' the Lord in tracin' the water, and ye say Providence sent ye; whyn't ye test your power in healin' o' the sick? Mebbe the Lord has gifted ye with the powers o' healin' likewise. Ye air powerful pious enough."

But Memory shrank back with a shocked look on his averted face. "I ain't got no call! no call!" he ejaculated faintly.

"Ye don't know what ye air got till ye have tried," said Almirey agog for a miracle; but the arrival of the doctor excited a new interest.

Miss Penny, with a sinking heart, had expected a

young man to make experiment of his doubtful skill upon poor Marjorie ; but this doctor was a man of years. He had a portly figure and sandy hair that stood up straight from his forehead, and his keen gray eyes looked from under his beetling brows and smiled sadly upon her, as he extended his hand in greeting, and said, in the somewhat gruff voice she still remembered.

“Well, Penny?”

Miss Penny had never expected to be so glad to see Dr. Griffith again ; but it was for Marjorie’s sake. “Oh,” she said, “I am *sure* you can save her!”

But the Doctor shook his head gravely over the sick girl.

“If nursing can save her life, please God, she shall not die!” Miss Penny declared.

“You are a good nurse,” said Dr. Griffith, with a grim smile.

“I know how to obey orders,” Miss Penny returned, with deepening color, at which she raged against herself and the Doctor equally.

“Well,” said Dr. Griffith, “my orders are, in the first place, that you must not wear yourself out. It is likely to be a long case ; she is not a strong child ; I’ve had this little girl for a patient before now. But you and I, Penny, had a case as bad once ; we need not despair.”

When the Doctor was gone, Mr. Lancaster broke again into tears and lamentations. “It’s a judgment, a judgment, sure, on my selfishness in keeping her out of the life that suits her better than this,” he moaned. “She ain’t my kind ; and, Penthesilea, don’t you think, maybe, I’d better let ’em know they can come and take her *now*?”

“No!” said Miss Penny. “No, I *don’t*! Send ’em word to come and take her off our hands to save us trouble?”

“That’s a fact!” said her uncle, with a sigh, and a look of infinite relief, that expressed itself in a wan, reluctant smile. “Penthesilea, I’m bound to follow your advice. But,” he added, reflectively, “I reckon, maybe, I owe it to the Lord if she *does* get well, to make the sacrifice.” And he sighed deeply. “She’s her mother’s own child, and maybe,—maybe, her mother’s kin ought to have her. I haven’t been clear in my mind

how I ought to do, and sometimes it stirs my conscience that I ain't right to keep her. But if the Lord spares her, I'll give her up, and just go on staying with you, Penthesilea, and when I meet her mother on the other side, I can say I done my best."

"If I nurse her back to life," Miss Penny declared, with vehement feeling, "I'll *never* give her up! I'm sick of her mother's kin, and I don't want you without Marjorie. I wish you'd go and chop out weeds, and never say another word about giving Marjorie up."

"It's coming on dark," said Mr. Joe, in feeble protest; "but I'll go out in the mornin' and look around."

Miss Penny stifled a groan of impatience.

Dr. Griffith came betimes the next morning, and he came again and again for many days, for Marjorie hovered long between life and death, with no one but Miss Penny to nurse her.

The farm was left to Mr. Joyce, and the garden to Mr. Joe; for there was not a moment Miss Penny could spare to give thought to her acres. She did, indeed, look from the windows once, to see the dwarfish, spindling cotton stalks expanding their leaves in the summer sun, and the weeds choking the early promise of the beloved garden of her toil, and her heart rebelled at the bitterness of the renunciation she was forced to make; but when she turned from the window and looked at Marjorie, she put aside this feeling as a thing unholy; was not Marjorie worth more than many gardens? And it was not for the prosperity of her farm that she covered her face now, and prayed dumbly, but for the young life battling against the Angel of Death. She did not look upon field or garden again, until her patient was out of danger, and able herself to sit by the window.

"How everything has grown," said Marjorie. "The cotton is white on the stalks."

"Yes," said Miss Penny, with a sigh she could not check; "grown and gone to seed."

Marjorie looked at her sadly, as she asked, "How is the garden, Cousin?"

"Oh, I don't know," Miss Penny answered, trying to speak lightly; "I don't think about the garden."

Marjorie put out her hand and timidly patted Miss Penny's, which had lost its brown tint in this long

seclusion. "You've been so good to me," she said, in her soft tremulous voice. "I'll never forget it."

"Don't—Don't forget it, Marjorie!" cried Miss Penny, in a sudden storm of passion that swept her out of her habitual shyness, and surprised and startled herself—when it was over—far more than Marjorie. "I've staked my all upon your life; I never had anybody to love before; I've won you back from death, and you belong to me." She was almost fierce in her intensity.

"Yes; I belong to you," murmured Marjorie, with closed eyes; "and I will take faithful care of you."

Miss Penny smiled at the extravagance of such a fancy; but Marjorie presently gave proof that she meant what she said.

"Did Daddy Joe sell the vegetables?" she asked anxiously, with open eyes.

"Yes," said Miss Penny. She knew that much about the garden. Mr. Joe, having discovered his inefficiency in the sick-room, had betaken himself to business with a superabundance of zeal, and a great lack of discretion. The hoeing of weeds did not suit his constitution, but he felt his competence to trade in vegetables, and every morning he mounted the sorrel and made for the town with whatever the weeds spared to Miss Penny's forgotten toil. The proceeds he expended in a variety of canned articles as delicacies for Marjorie, which she could not eat, and which he and Mrs. Joyce consumed: he needed, he said, to nourish his strength, in case he should be called upon to sit up with Marjorie, which Miss Penny would never have permitted. Mrs. Joyce's reason for indulging in "sto' boughten victuals" apparently was to test her digestion, and make occasion for an extra dose of medicine.

"But never mind about that, Marjorie," Miss Penny added, after a struggle to put away the recollection of this extravagance.

"Did he give you the money?" asked Marjorie, not heeding.

"I never asked him for it, Marjorie. I wish you wouldn't worry about it; you are too weak. It will all come out right in time, now that you are well. That fever was the only *real trouble*, child, and we've got

through with that, bless God, and by His help, we'll get through with the rest."

"But," said Marjorie, piteously, "we'll have to manage him, Cousin. My poor Daddy! I think—I don't know—but I've thought a long time that something troubles him." And Marjorie sighed.

"What should trouble him, pray?" said Miss Penny, brusquely. "All is well enough with *him*, Marjorie."

"He never means any harm," Marjorie said, sadly; "but—we can't depend upon him. Only *don't, don't* ever let him know it. We'll have to manage him."

"Very well; we *will* manage him," said Miss Penny, nothing loth.

Marjorie's artless words, her pleading tones and tremulous sighs, revealed, better than any explicit statement, how bravely this sensitive young heart had borne the burden of Mr. Joe Lancaster's shortcomings. But Miss Penny had needed no revelation from Marjorie to make it clear that it would not be wise to leave her affairs any longer in her uncle's hands; and by way of putting her relations with this slack-twisted, self-constituted agent on a safe and comfortable basis of restriction, she determined to ask him for a definite account of the sale of her vegetables. She seized the first opportunity that presented, which was after supper, when Marjorie had fallen asleep.

She found her uncle seated at the improvised table where they ate their meals, writing by the dim and smoky light of a tin lamp.

Miss Penny always went directly to the point. "Uncle Joe," said she, "I want to know about the money you got for the vegetables?"

"Money?" repeated he, poising his pen in air, with one hand, and pushing up his spectacles with the other. "Why, Penthesilia?"

"Yes, *money*," Miss Penny insisted with annoyance. She was a strict accountant, and that blank in her ledger that should be filled by the financial history of her garden, fretted her; the money, she knew, was gone, and she knew how it had gone, but she hoped to be able to learn how much it amounted to.

"Why, Penthesilea, you surely don't begrudge what

I bought for Marjorie?" said Mr. Lancaster, with reproachful surprise.

"What did you get for Marjorie?" Miss Penny asked.

"I paid for what the doctor ordered, myself."

"Well—a few canned things," said her uncle, reluctantly. "Delicacies, you know."

"And tell you what, Miss Lankster," broke in Mrs. Joyce, who was seated on the edge of the gallery, opposite the front door, "sto' bought victuals is costly, hit is; 'pears like you can't never get enough on 'em, and then hit allers requires *pills*—in my experience."

"Well, what was the amount altogether; that's what I want to know?" Miss Penny urged, ignoring Mrs. Joyce.

"The land! Penthesilea, how could you expect me to keep account of trifles, and sickness in the house?" remonstrated Mr. Joe, with meek indignation.

"For that very reason," said Miss Penny. "Sickness is expensive."

"The bes' way is to be allers takin' medicine, so's not to git sick," remarked Mrs. Joyce. "That's what keeps me up, I'm that po'ly."

"So," said Miss Penny, still ignoring Mrs. Joyce, "you don't know what the sale of my vegetables amounted to?"

"No, Penthesilea, upon my soul I don't!" replied Mr. Lancaster, with magnanimous frankness. "What difference does it make? Ain't our interests all one?"

"No," said Miss Penny, stoutly; "not in that sense. I can not have that sort of community of interest, and you may as well know it, Uncle Joe."

"Sartin sure," said Mrs. Joyce, who had risen, and was standing in the doorway. "Me and Joyce is bound to come in for our *sheer* in the profits."

"Mrs. Joyce," said Miss Penny, severely, "I am talking to my uncle about my individual affairs; when it comes to a discussion of your and Mr. Joyce's business, I shan't let him interfere, I promise you." At which decided hint Mrs. Joyce took herself off, in high dudgeon, as Miss Penny meant she should; that is, Miss Penny meant she should take herself off, and for the dudgeon she did not care.

"I know it's been a trial, Penthesilea," said her uncle.

"I didn't expect to be a burden; I thought I'd be a help; and I *have* kept your name in the market against another season, and *I've given you Marjorie*."

"Yes," said Miss Penny, softening, "you have given me Marjorie; let us say no more."

"Not but what," continued Mr. Lancaster, huskily, "not but what I'm greatly troubled in mind, Penthesilea, as to the right—"

"Does Marjorie know about these kinsfolk of her mother?" Miss Penny interrupted, with a sudden, sharp fear at her heart. "Does she hanker after them?"

"Oh, no, no," Mr. Lancaster replied, in an awe-stricken whisper. "Marjorie don't know—she *don't know nothin'*."

"I'll never give her up," Miss Penny declared. "I've *earned* her; and I'll give up my farm first."

"Penthesilea," said her uncle, in a tone of alarm; "you wouldn't make a slave of her?"

"No; but I would make a slave of myself for her."

"It is just as if she was your own flesh and blood?" said Mr. Joe under his breath.

"Yes," answered Miss Penny. "It seems to me it's her I've waited for all my life, more than this farm."

"Maybe so, Penthesilea," assented Mr. Joe, musingly. "The ways of Providence *are* queer." And then he wiped his eyes, and blew his nose, and turned him to his writing again.

He signed his name, folded his letter, and put it into a large white envelope, which he addressed with elaborate painstaking; Miss Penny watching him the while, but from too great a distance to distinguish the words he wrote.

"Uncle Joe," said she, "are you writing to Marjorie's kin about Marjorie?"

"No, no, Penthesilea," Mr. Joe replied, slapping his hand guiltily over the envelope. "I give you my word I *ain't*. It may be my duty, but I ain't never got my consent to do my duty *that way* by Marjorie! I ain't writing to Marjorie's kin about her; this here is a different matter. See, Penthesilea, I ain't ungrateful. This spell o' fever of Marjorie's has made things tight for you, and winter coming on; and I must be doing some-

thing or another to help along, and so—and so—you see, Penthesilea, I'm writing to a particular old friend of *yours*, who'd be as willing as he is able to help you out, I don't doubt."

Thus unexpectedly was Miss Penny apprised of the fact that Morrison Kenric still lived. Many a time, since she bade farewell to him in the murky dawn on that mountain road, had her heart ached, for the assurance that the man she had saved from capture had escaped the slaughter of the battlefield, the pestilence of the camp; and now that she had this assurance at last, she was steeped to the lips in bitterness to learn that he lived to consign her to oblivion, counting as nothing the tremendous sacrifice she would have made to ensure his safety—for Miss Penny forgot that she did not tell Morrison Kenric the ground of her promise to marry Luke Rosser; she could only feel keenly, resentfully, that her service and her peril had been accepted and she had been forgotten. He was living now, in ease and comfort; what might have been his fate, but for her?

"Uncle Joe?" she cried, reaching the table at one bound. "Give me that letter!"

But Mr. Joe, though he quailed, still held on to the envelope. "Now, Penthesilea," said he, entreatingly, "don't you be unreasonable. You can't provide things comfortable, just yet for Marjorie, without some help, and so, I tell you, I'm writing to Morrison Kenric—"

"How dare you!" cried Miss Penny, fiercely, snatching the letter and tearing it into bits. "I tell you, I will not have Morrison Kenric taxed for me or mine."

"*Taxed?* Lord, Penthesilea," said Mr. Joe, in unaffected amazement, "you don't know he's a rich banker, one of the foremost? Ain't you never heard from him?"

"No," answered Miss Penny, with a stamp of her foot; "I know nothing about him; I will have nothing whatever to do with him. And I tell you now, I tell you solemnly, so sure as ever you write to Morrison Kenric about me or my affairs, you may go shift for yourself, and youshan't have Marjorie either!"

"Well, you are a spirited one, Penthesilea," said her uncle admiringly. "And if that's your stand, I ain't

agoin' against it. No, no; the heft of responsibility is off *my* shoulders. But I did make sure you and him were friends."

"That was a long time ago," said Miss Penny, briefly. "I'll work my way out, and I'll take care of Marjorie; but don't you interfore, *please*, Uncle Joe."

"I ain't agoin' to, Penthesilea," Uncle Joe promised, with a meekness that smote his niece to the heart. She turned and kissed him.

"You've given me Marjorie," she said.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. JOYCE'S HARVEST.

WHEN Miss Penny sat down to the work of squaring accounts, she found the situation gloomy indeed. Her funds were very low, and it was hardly supposable that her Uncle Joe had any money, seeing that he had allowed her to supply all that Marjorie's illness had called for, and had used up the income from the garden besides. Nevertheless, Miss Penny thought it might be well to ask him.

"Haven't you any money, Uncle Joe?" said she.

The question was plainly a vexatious one. Mr. Lancaster shuffled and twisted, and cleared his throat twice or thrice, before he said, querulously, and without looking at his niece:

"Now, Penthesilea, do I seem the kind of man to have any money? Bad luck ain't my fault; and you won't let me write to him that owes you his life, maybe—"

"No, no. I'll mortgage my entire possessions first."

"I've no doubt you'll manage," said Gentleman Joe, cheerfully. "And when you get to making money, I'll do the financiering. That's more in my line than digging weeds, or peddling vegetables. I just took to that, so as to save you from worrying, and to leave you free to look after Marjorie. But, I'd rather manage your

money affairs, your investments, and such ; that's my line."

Miss Penny turned away in despair of her uncle Joe, and Mr. Lancaster turned away in suspicion of his niece, Penthesilea. She had grown grasping, that was clear to his mind, and she was aiming to appropriate the little he had laid by. It had cost him a great struggle to leave his two or three hundred dollars untouched so long. He had put it in a bank in Atlanta ; but Penthesilea was so—*irrepressible*, that was what *she* was : and she would certainly discover it and force him to give it to her, unless he provided against such violence ; and his best way, he thought, was to go to Atlanta, and spend it at once, for the benefit of himself and Marjorie.

So, the next morning, Gentleman Joe departed, without further explanation than that he was going on business.

Miss Penny, in considerable uneasiness, questioned Marjorie, but Marjorie did not know.

While Mr. Lancaster was absent, Dr. Griffith called, not professionally, evidently, for he had taken unusual pains with his dress, but Miss Penny received him in working attire.

"I'm taking up your time," said the Doctor ; but he pulled off his gloves, and sat down, as if he meant to stay.

"I'm ready for business always," said Miss Penny. "I suppose you came to talk about your bill ?"

"Oh, Penny !"

"Well *I* want to talk about it," returned Miss Penny.

"Hang the bill ;" said the Doctor. "Joe Lancaster's responsibility, any way. I came to talk to you. To give you advice."

"Oh !" said Miss Penny.

"I suppose you don't want it, but—" here followed one of his long pauses—"You've shouldered a bigger burden than you can carry," he enunciated, at last.

"If you mean Marjorie—"

"No ; I don't mean Marjorie. I mean—everything." The Doctor sighed, and Miss Penny echoed the sigh ; she had no reply ready.

"If you keep that fellow, Joyce, and his wife, you'll be always behind," resumed the Doctor. "*He* is an

obstinate pig, and his wife swallows too much physic to be any earthly account."

"I don't mean to keep them!" Miss Penny declared vigorously. "What I need is"—but she paused in sudden embarrassment at finding herself about to confide her plans to Dr. Griffith.

"What you need is somebody to take care of *you*," said the Doctor, gravely.

"No, I don't!" Miss Penny declared, rising precipitately. "Oh, no!"

The Doctor sighed. "I've known you such a long time," he said.

"Then you ought to know—"

"That's why I call you Penny," he went on, with great earnestness. "An old friend, Penny—may have the privilege of speaking plainly."

"Well, yes," said Miss Penny, angry with herself that his words and his manner should so much embarrass her.

"Joe Lancaster has *some* money," the Doctor continued. "Laid by in bank. I don't know how much. But he ought not to let you bear all the burden of this child of his."

"Of course," said Miss Penny, with a proud reserve, "He has gone to Atlanta to see about his money."

The Doctor looked at her, a little puzzled. He did not tell Miss Penny that Gentleman Joe had borrowed money of him to go to Atlanta, nor did he ever tell her—for the money was never repaid. He picked up his buck skin gloves and began drawing them back and forth through his hands, frowning; yet, though he remained long silent, it was evident that he had more to say.

Miss Penny wished he would go. In her restlessness, she went to the chimney-shelf, and began to set her crockery in order.

"I am not a rich man," the Doctor informed her, from across the room.

Miss Penny thought in the long pause he made, that he was surely going to say something about the bill.

"Neither am I poor," the Doctor made his second announcement. "I could take good care of you, Penny." And before Miss Penny could take the sense

of his words, he had risen, and was holding both her hands. "I have known you a long time, and I have always loved you."

He had said this to Miss Penny once before, and she remembered, with wondering self-condemnation, that she had been incredulous, and violently indignant. She was not incredulous now, nor indignant; but she was greatly troubled. "I wish you wouldn't," she faltered.

"Is it no use?" he asked.

"None in the world," she answered, sadly.

For a moment he did not speak; then he whispered, huskily, as he dropped her hands:

"It shan't make me less your friend, Penny."

Miss Penny stood looking after him as he walked down the pathway to the gate, and the tears rose in her eyes. "Oh, dear, dear me!" she sighed, "I am nearly forty years old. That ever such a thing should happen to me."

And Dr. Griffith, as he rode away, muttered to himself:

"She hasn't forgotten the Yankee yet. Confound him!"

But Miss Penny presently had another visitor, who crowded Dr. Griffith quite out of her thoughts—for the time. She had gone into the garden, and was measuring off the space destined for her choice cabbage plants, when Memory Waits called to her, from over the fence:

"Mornin', Miss Lankster? The leetle one gettin' strong yit?"

Miss Penny felt very grateful to the young fellow who had been a friend in need, and she turned aside from work quite willingly to speak with him. "Marjorie you mean?" said she. "Oh, yes; she is growing stronger every day."

Memory blushed and took off his hat a second time. "I brought her a bunch o' pa'tridges," said he, handing the birds over the fence. "Them as has been ailin' and air mendin' likes a difference in their victuals."

"You are very thoughtful," said Miss Penny, without the slightest suspicion that Memory could cherish any sentiment for such a child. "Won't you carry them in? I know she'll be mightily pleased."

"I ain't got time," stammered Memory, coloring. "I want to talk to you, Miss Lankster, on business. I want to come and live with you."

"Live with me?" repeated Miss Penny, with secret indignation. Had she set up a farm to serve as an asylum for vagrants? "I've no place for you," said she, coldly.

Memory's countenance fell. "I reckon there *mought* be *some* work I could do," he sighed. "I'd like to learn farming."

"I thought you had a calling?" said Miss Penny, still coldly.

"I'd like a regular business," he replied, coloring.

"There is plenty to do," said Miss Penny, in a tone that was not encouraging; "but I want somebody to obey *my* orders."

"Try me," urged Memory.

Miss Penny, under pressure of work, began to feel disposed to try him. "When can you come?" she asked.

"Now," said Memory.

This promptness pleased the woman of business, and after a little discussion, Memory, the Gifted, became her hireling, to the intense disgust of Mrs. Joyce.

"Mem'ry Waits has a gift o' the Lord," said she; "and he has tuk to work."

"'Twon't last," her husband prophesied, with sour brevity.

A few days later, Gentleman Joe returned. He had a new suit of clothes, a new hat, and new boots, all of the best make, and he brought with him a large trunk. What to think, Miss Penny did not know: was her uncle Joe *very rich*; or—appalling fear!—had he made these extravagant purchases expecting her to pay for them?

"You see, Penthesilea," said he, with smiling self-approval, "in my opinion saving amounts to waste, when the time comes for spending. I never was close in my life, and I've laid out the little money I had mostly in things needful for me and for Marjorie, so as we won't be any expense to you for clothes. And I've brought you a present too, Penthesilea; I didn't forget you."

When the trunk was opened, he presented his niece

with a gorgeous red and blue silk handkerchief, and a pair of gilt bracelets.

Miss Penny had a struggle to thank him, and she could not resist saying, "You should not have wasted your money on such things."

Gentleman Joe turned to Marjorie who stood by with an anxious, yet smiling face. "I reckon you'll like what I've brought *you*, Marjorie," said he, as he carefully removed the paper from a well-wrapped package, and displayed a sky-blue silk. "Your mother used to have a dress like that," said he, with appealing eyes searching Marjorie's face for the pleasure he hoped to give.

"And what on earth can the child do with that!" exclaimed Miss Penny, sharply. "I hope in Heaven you brought her some flannels?"

"Flannels?" repeated Mr. Lancaster blankly. "Ain't she got flannels?"

"It is beautiful! It is beautiful!" said Marjorie, quickly, with rapturous admiration. "My dear, dear Daddy." And she laid her soft white cheek against his, with a mute caress.

"Ah, wait till you see all I've brought you!" said Gentleman Joe; and he dived into the trunk, drawing out sashes, scarfs, ribbons, silk stockings, a hat and feathers—every variety of inappropriate finery, in short, that Mrs. Braid's shop could furnish forth. And Marjorie kept repeating in soft and rapturous tones, "Oh, beautiful! Beautiful!" to Miss Penny's infinite vexation and disgust. She had rejoiced in Marjorie as a girl of sense, and behold, Marjorie had a frivolous taste for finery.

"I cannot possibly see the use of such things for a girl in Marjorie's position," said Miss Penny, with irrepressible, impatient scorn.

"You ain't expectin' to make a farm-hand of Marjorie?" retorted her uncle, with angry defiance. "I hear you say you don't mean to live *this way* forever, and these things are all best quality; they'll last a lifetime. Her mother's people were used to the best; why shouldn't Marjorie like such things? And why shouldn't she wear them?"

"Oh. if you can afford it!" said Miss Penny, angry

as he. "But I do wish you had brought her something useful."

"I don't mind about useful things," Marjorie made haste to say. "I like everything you've brought me, dear Daddy, dear Daddy; they'll last me a life-time. You need never buy me anything more."

"It was the last I had, Marjorie, *the last*," said Daddy Joe, tremulously, as he took the child in his arms and kissed her. "And I spent it all on you—mostly."

Marjorie stroked his hair and patted his cheek, and the two seemed very happy.

The sight of this complete satisfaction in each other, was, under the circumstances, too much for Miss Penny. She left them, and went to her own room, where she sat down in great perturbation. Surely her uncle Joe was accountable to no one for the way in which he spent his money—indeed, he could never have told what became of it all—but Marjorie! Marjorie was a disappointment: better would it be that she should go to her mother's friends; and the sooner, the better.

The door opened softly, and Marjorie came in. Her face was pale, save for the two bright spots that burned in each cheek, as if the fever had come again. Miss Penny looked at her, but did not speak.

"It is a pity, Cousin! It is a pity!" said Marjorie.

"What is a pity?" said Miss Penny, with cold displeasure. "That here you cannot display that useless, extravagant frippery?"

"I had to be glad," said Marjorie, with no shadow of resentment or reproach. "It would have grieved him so if I had not been glad. And, Oh, I love him so! My poor old, shiftless, useless Daddy—I love him so!" She covered her face with her hands, and the tears dropped through her fingers.

Her words were balm to Miss Penny's heart, though they smote her conscience. Marjorie might be a surprise, but she was no disappointment, after all, and her mother's kindred should never possess her; but as for herself—

"I am a mean contemptible old flint!" she said aloud.

"Ah, no! no!" said Marjorie, smiling through her tears. "But you know you don't *believe in me* as he does; I am not your child."

Miss Penny sighed. "No," she said to herself, "she is not my child; but I can live for her as if she were my child, and her mother's kindred could do no more."

After all, Miss Penny, as she now perceived, was none the worse for her uncle's senseless extravagance; he had but spent his own money, and she had still her own courage and energy to sustain her, and Marjorie to live for! The obnoxious cotton crop could be relied upon to bring in some returns, and Memory Waits carried out her plans so thoroughly that she could now look forward to some profit from her turnips and cabbages. Her greatest concern now, was to rid herself of Joyce and his wife, to which end circumstances were shaping themselves in Miss Penny's favor. Memory Waits was destined to be, indirectly, the instrument of her deliverance; for as Memory rose in her estimation, his prestige with the Joyces declined. Mrs. Joyce, in fact, had held the young man cheap from the day he slighted his "gift" to undertake regular work.

"A man what kin turn his back on a callin' o' the Lord, kin do anything tha'ts mean," she declared. "And thar ain't no tellin' *what* Memr'y *mought* a come to, sich as healin' of the sick by prah and fastin'; but shucks! talk about *him* fastin'! He'll eat mo' any day, than the mizry in my side'll give me leave to cook."

"Women's motions is allers shiftly," said Joyce, oracularly. "You wait until the stress of the cotton crop is over," Mr. Joyce, feeling a personal interest in the cotton to which he had given his almost exclusive attention, was busy gathering it in, by the help of a laborer he had hired, with Miss Penny's promise to pay. "Miss Lankster 'll find out by that time, that Mem'r'y he ain't got no knowledge of lan' and craps; all the sense he's got, is 'bout the water courses."

"And *that* belonged to the Lord," said Almirey; "and the Lord in vengeance may take it away. *I* dunno how come Mem'r'y *ain't* no sense in lan' and craps; he b'longs to them Waitses over in Henery County. They was stiddy farmers, I allers hear tell."

"*You* ain't got no call to go upholdin' of Memory Waits, as I kin see," said Joyce, irritably.

"I ain't a upholdin' of him," retorted Almirey; "but facs is facs. Them Waitses, give 'em a chance, was

allers scrougin', and this here one is agoin' to scrouge you, if you don't scrouge him."

"Shucks!" said Joyce, "*He* ain't goin' to have no call to stay, after the cotton is off the land."

When the cotton was hauled away, however, to a neighbor's gin, and it was seen that Miss Penny showed no disposition to be rid of the interloper, Mr. Joyce thought it time to remonstrate. For he now saw that Miss Penny reinforced by Memory Waits, would prove too many for him. Nevertheless, he blindly believed himself to be indispensable, so he said, with an insolent swagger, that "Mem'ry must go, if Miss Lankster expected to hold on to Reuben Joyce."

"I don't expect to hold on to you," Miss Penny answered, with blunt decision. "I expect you to go."

This announcement so astounded and infuriated Joyce, that had she been a man he would have struck her.

"Expect me to *go*?" he shouted; "Why Miss Lankster, how the devil kin you manage 'thout me?"

"I mean to be mistress of my own farm, and master, too," Miss Penny, informed him.

"Now, Miss Lankster," said Joyce, cooling down to an air of indulgent superiority, "you wouldn't had a pound o' cotton, 'cept for me and hit's the only crap what is bringing you money."

"I know it!" said Miss Penny, promptly; "about forty dollars, net, a bale; and the whole of it won't amount to your year's wages."

"Then I kin tell you this, Miss Lankster," said Joyce, menacingly, "if my wages ain't paid to the day, and *prompt*, I'll have the law of ye. And quit here I don't, me and my wife, ontel they *is* paid; I got the rights of a lien on that crop, I reckon, and I'll turn ye out befo' ever I'll be cheated by a female woman."

Miss Penny was angry enough to wish herself a man, but she could not let Joyce have the satisfaction of seeing this.

"It is now two months before the time is out," said she calmly; "but your wages for the entire year shall be paid you, the minute I see you ready to start; and the sooner, the better."

Joyce went out from her presence utterly crestfallen; but after talking the situation over with Almirey, he de-

cided to accept the present of the two months. Man and wife "allowed they had both on 'em allers hankered to go to furrin parts, and a ranch in Taxis mought be a long sight easier to live by, than another woman's farm, in Georgy."

Miss Penny was happier, the day she saw them depart, than she had been any day for a year past; she was her own mistress once more.

"But you ain't got a cook," said Mr. Lancaster, dolefully. "And, surely, Pentheseilea, you ain't goin' to put cooking on Marjorie?"

"Don't be a fool, Uncle Joe," replied Miss Penny. "I've done most of the cooking myself, any way."

"I can get you a cook willin' to work," said Mem'ry Waits. "And don't you be no ways onsettled, Miss Lankaster; I can find you labor to hire. Ther wasn't any too many round here willin' to set in with Reub Joyce, and that's a fac'. He were deemed onlucky."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MISS PENNY RECEIVES A SHOCK.

WHEN Miss Penny Lancaster's first year at farming closed, she found herself in debt, and almost **moneyless**; but she had learned much, and she was not one to be discouraged. Moreover, her establishment was now on a satisfactory footing. Memory Waits did homage to her authority, and she had a cook in her kitchen who was, in every way, an improvement upon Mrs. Joyce. True, her Uncle Joe did not fail to give that discouragement which the masculine mind is fain to bestow upon female enterprise; but Marjorie made amends. With the bracing winter weather, the girl grew strong, and plump, and blooming, and from this time began to manifest an eager, intelligent interest in the affairs of the farm that made her ever and ever dearer to Miss Penny's heart.

The garden yielded a handsome profit this second

year ; and besides vegetables, Miss Penny sold wheat, oats, millet-hay, crab-grass-hay, butter and milk, so that it might now be said she began to enjoy the first fruits of her labors.

At the instance of her Uncle Joe, who, through dint of the judicious restraint exercised over him by herself and Marjorie, had become "something between a hindrance and a help," Miss Penny bought two hives of Italian bees, and planted a number of scuppernong vines. These investments gave busy-idle Mr. Joe Lancaster wholesome employment, and in due time yielded a profitable return.

But Miss Penny did not reach prosperity at one bound. Only by slow degrees, with patient industry and self-denial, and most careful management, did she at last pay off her indebtedness, and find herself able to make those improvements she deemed desirable.

The first purchase she made, when she began to see her way clear of debt, was a pony, that Marjorie might ride to school, a mile and a half distant. Yet Marjorie still contrived to find time to attend to the poultry, the flowers, and other little matters which she had taken under her exclusive jurisdiction.

In three years' time, Miss Penny was able to build a smoke-house and cure her own bacon ; her barn at last received its coat of red paint, and she owned the long-coveted red wagon and a sturdy team. She now planted a peach-orchard and a vineyard, each of which produced, after a few years, a valuable harvest. Her garden paid her well, after the fourth year, and she not only saved meat for her own consumption, but often sold a well-fattened pig to the butcher, and now and then a beef ; and every pound of Miss Lancaster's beef was bespoken before it was put upon the market. She had earned distinction, and whatever she had to sell commanded a ready price.

Thus every year saw Miss Penny's enterprise steadily advancing towards the ideal farm of her youthful aspirations, and every year beheld Miss Penny happier, plumper, browner than before.

It cannot be claimed, of course, that in all these years she met with no discouragements, had no bad luck, as the farmers phrased it ; that her wheat never rusted, that

her oats never took the blight, that her cattle never went lame, or that all her crops came to their full perfection, season after season. She had her losses and mischances, but her opportunity she was always quick to seize.

It is no discredit to Miss Penny to admit that the law of environment operated largely in her favor; for during these years of her sturdy struggle, Briarville had grown and prospered, and the success of the woman farmer was due, in some measure, to the summer-boarder from the Southern coast, and the winter health-seeker from the rigorous North, who, within these few years, took this picturesque, primitive little hill-town by storm: so that when Miss Penny had been six years or so the owner of her farm, Briarville had dotted all the nearer hill-sides with bow-windowed cottages, and Miss Penny's own modest domain had completely changed its bare and bloomless aspect. Garden, orchards, fields, pasture and woodland confessed the hand of thrift. The subdued murmur of bees in the air, the low of well-fed kine, the call of chanticleer, the sharp cry of Guinea hens, the squall of the pea-fowl, mingling with other voices of the poultry-yard, made music in Miss Penny's ears, and she counted herself a happy woman. For her hands and her heart were full; she had her farm in its perfection, and she had Marjorie; and Marjorie was now in her perfection; a slim, pretty creature of nineteen, brown-eyed, brown-haired, and brown-skinned too, but with the bloom of youth and health, and happiness.

Of all the sounds that swelled and mingled around that busy domain, Miss Penny loved best the voice of Marjorie, coming and going about the house, busy among the poultry, the bees, the flowers. Of all the dear delights in her perfected farm that Miss Penny's ardent imagination had pictured, this fair young girl, the light of her eyes, the joy of her heart, was the one great blessing she had never dreamed of, the God-given feature, without which the farm and all its belongings would have been little more than a mere means of livelihood. It was Marjorie who trained the vines about the porch; it was Marjorie who planted and tended those masses of gorgeous and delicate bloom that made gay the borders leading to the gate, and the beds along the

bit of lawn at the side of the house away from the garden. Miss Penny's yearning vision of "the wonder that would be" in the way of lilacs and guelder roses, holly-hocks and prince's-feather, jagged pinks and flaunting peonies adorning her doorway, had come to pass, and more besides. No "unprofitably gay" flower-garden was this, for Marjorie sent her bouquets to town, and made her own pocket-money from the sale of her exquisite geraniums and fuschias, fragrant heliotrope and mignonette and spicy carnations.

It grew to be the fashion to ride out to this model farm, and strangers often stopped to admire Marjorie's little garden and the uniquely pretty gardener, who thought their eyes took note only of her plants. For to herself, to Miss Penny, to her Daddy Joe, Marjorie was still a child; to Memory Waits she had grown to be a sort of wonder, a creature of a different order from any others that he knew, and she made him afraid.

Memory had become a great, broad-shouldered, vigorous young fellow of some twenty-five years now, good to look upon, sober, steady and industrious. He had saved money,—for he had no one dependent upon him, and he might have bought land of his own; but he manifested no disposition to leave Miss Penny, and it began to be whispered that Memory, with one eye on Marjorie, and one eye on the thriving farm, looked forward to a permanent partnership.

But these whispers never reached Miss Penny's ears; she kept her faith in Memory Waits unshaken, and she believed Marjorie to be as inalienably her own as the farm. For her she had forgotten that old yearning to meet her sisters once more; she had attained prosperity, but the intention to renew those long disused ties of kindred had perished utterly out of her thoughts; she needed them no longer; Marjorie sufficed.

Poor old Gentleman Joe had always been more or less of a drawback, but Miss Penny forgave him everything for Marjorie's sweet sake; whatever vexations he caused her, she never forgot that he had brought her the sunshine of her life. He sat all day in shady places, now fiddling his favorite tunes in a feeble, half-hearted way, sometimes visited by a spasmodic energy, when

he would work great damage in the garden, or among the fruit-trees, or excite wild disturbance among the setting turkeys, for what purpose Marjorie, wise in poultry lore, never could determine. Sometimes he went into town and lounged around the court-house and stores, but Briarville was an alien place to him ; he never felt at home either among the residents or the strangers, and he was always glad to get back to his corner of the porch and scrape on his fiddle, the sound of which no longer vexed Miss Penny : she heard it now with something of the old delight her childhood felt in the accomplishments of her Uncle Joe, and she rejoiced that he found pleasure in this old companion of his vacant hours.

But despite the solace of music, Gentleman Joe was subject to fits of melancholy, when he would lament tearfully, to his niece :

“ I’m a kind of failure, Penthesilea ; I don’t amount to anything ; but I’ve give you Marjorie, which I ought to have sent her to her mother’s kin.”

“ Marjorie could not possibly be better off than she is,” Miss Penny would declare, with a decision that was almost fierce, but that yet seemed to carry some sort of comfort to Mr. Lancaster’s uneasy mind.

“ Do you think so, Penthesilea ? ” he would say, with a tremulous smile. “ Well, I ain’t so clear as to my right ; but some day I’ll ask Malcolm Griffith.”

To which Miss Penny invariably retorted :

“ Nonsense ! How should Dr. Griffith know ? ”

And Mr. Lancaster never did ask him, though Dr. Griffith often came to visit the thriving farm. For through all these years the Doctor remained Miss Penny’s staunch friend.

Nor was he her only friend in Briarville. Miss Penny in conquering fortune had conquered the respect of a prejudiced community. People had ceased to laugh at her, now that she no longer rode on a man’s saddle to peddle a few vegetables. Though she drove into town in her market cart whenever it suited her convenience to do so, she had a neat little rockaway for Sundays, an evidence of prosperity that was indisputable,—and irresistible.

And so, Miss Penny, having attained her hopes after

nearly seven years of hard work and brave economy, enjoyed her well-earned comfort in serene content, nor dreamed of change, other than seasons wrought.

In this comfortable frame of mind she was walking down the main street of Briarville, one June morning, intent upon some business connected with her farm. This street had undergone great modifications since Miss Penny first knew it; in the first place, it was no longer, by name, a street; it called itself an avenue, and instead of the one unpretending tavern and two or three primitive shops, there were two hotels, large and showy, a bank, an ice-cream saloon, and a pleasure-garden; the little shops too, were "stores" no longer, but "emporiums" with plate-glass windows full of gauds for which Miss Penny had no use, but in which she was always ready to indulge Marjorie—as if she might grapple a young girl to her side forever with yards of ribbon, and keep her content with a painted fan!

A band was playing in the balcony of the more ambitious of the two hotels, and carriages of all styles, phætons, wagonettes, parties on horseback, flashed back and forth among the ox-carts and spike-teamed wagons, for the "season" had begun early this year, and Miss Penny, as she was crossing the street was nearly run over by a pair of spirited horses attached to an open carriage.

The driver drew rein in front of a drug-store that paraded an aquarium and a showy soda-fountain, and Miss Penny, as she landed on the curbstone with a bound, heard a little cry of alarm, which came from the sole occupant of the carriage, a young woman, past the early grace of girlhood, indeed, but in the full bloom of her splendid beauty.

Usually the fine folk that came to Briarville had small attraction for Miss Penny's eyes, but this fair creature fascinated her gaze, and she stood staring with open mouth and panting breath, hardly conscious where she was.

The beautiful, richly dressed brunette was evidently accustomed to such homage, for she manifested no embarrassment, but only smiled, and said, with a gracious condescension:

"My good woman, pray be careful ; you might have been seriously hurt."

"Who are *you*—to call me 'good woman' ?" said Miss Penny, with brusque resentment ; then, turning suddenly, she went on down the street with an unsteady step ; it was no slight shock that she had received.

The lady in the carriage drew herself up haughtily and turned her eyes away to the distant hills ; but presently glancing again at Miss Penny, she leaned forward, and asked the driver, a negro lad dressed with some pretensions to livery, a question that made him reel on his seat with laughter.

"Lawd; no, ma'am !" he answered, recovering his dignity. "She ain't drunk. Why, she's Miss Penny Lancaster, the level-headedest somebody in these yer parts."

"Oh !" said the lady, and colored.

"Hit's a name you're boun'ter hear, ef you stay in Briarville so long's a day," the driver proceeded to inform her. "Yonder's Dr. Griffith stoppin' her now. Dr. Griffith sets a heap o' sto' by Miss Lancaster ; makes all his sick folks buy their milk an' aiggs to her farm."

"I remember, now," said the lady. "It was the Doctor who told us of her."

Miss Penny, with her ideas all astray, had forgotten her errand, and was wandering past her destination when she met the Doctor. She was about to pass him unrecognized, but he stopped her with the remark :

"You are the very person I want to see ; got some business with you."

The magical word "business," brought Miss Penny's wool-gathering wits to order ; but before she could make reply the Doctor spoke again :

"What's the matter with you ? You don't look like yourself this morning."

"I've had a—shock," said Miss Penny slowly, with her hand to her head. "I was near being run over just now."

"I thought you were always too wide awake——"

"Let us talk about that business !" Miss Penny interrupted.

"This is it," said the Doctor, drawing her aside, "There is a Miss Fish—an elderly lady—at the hotel,

who brings me a letter of introduction from a brother physician in Savannah. Miss Fish has with her a young relative who is commended to my care. A fine young fellow. I've taken a fancy to him, though I've seen him but once."

"And you want some specially fresh milk and eggs for him?" Miss Penny suggested. "You shall have 'em."

"I want more than that," said the doctor. "He isn't regularly an invalid, you understand. But he is an only child. That makes his case important. What he most needs is—a judicious watchfulness."

"Where is his mother?" Miss Penny asked, not in the least divining the Doctor's drift.

"His mother died some years ago. Pulmonary trouble. That's the ground of anxiety in his case. He has been all winter with friends in Florida, and he has spent the spring in Savannah. The doctors there recommended him to this climate; but a hotel isn't the best place for him, and these boarding-houses are not much better. He ought to *rusticate*. That's my opinion. Though I've seen him but a moment. Now I want to put him with you."

"Goodness, gracious, *me!*" exclaimed Miss Penny, with unaccustomed remembrance of her unruly brothers in the long-forgotten past. "Boys are such a worry. It's too tremendous a responsibility."

The Doctor laughed. "This is a boy of twenty-two or three," he said.

"O—h!" said Miss Penny. But she shook her head.

"Now do consider it," urged the Doctor. "Quiet, good food, good air—these he needs. And you have plenty of room."

"Yes," sighed Miss Penny. "Mine is a bigger house than I wanted; but—I was thinking of my sisters when I bought it." She paused, conscience-smitten, remembering how seldom she had thought of her sisters in the last seven years.

"Well—*they* are not likely to hunt you up," the Doctor declared, bluntly.

"I don't—know," said Miss Penny, musingly. "Strange things happen sometimes." And again she sighed.

"They aren't likely to hunt you up," the Doctor insisted. "Take my word for it. Come, now, Miss Penny, no need to be offended. I want you to say you'll take my young friend to board." And he colored guiltily, knowing that to have a patient domiciled under Miss Penny's roof would afford an admirable excuse for frequent visits to the farm, which of course implied the opportunity to see the farm's mistress oftener than usual.

"But I'm a farmer," Miss Penny objected, serenely unconscious of the advantage the Doctor hoped to reap. "I don't keep a boarding-house."

"Well, fix up a room. He is able to pay well for everything. Keeps his own horses wherever he goes. Suppose you come with me now, and see Miss Fish?"

"What is his name?" Miss Penny asked, as she walked on with the Doctor, wondering why she lacked energy to say "no" at once to his proposition.

"His name?" repeated Dr. Griffith, with a puzzled frown. "Odd! but it wasn't mentioned in the note of introduction. I suppose it's the same name. Oh, yes; Fish, to be sure! I remember now, Miss Fish introduced him as her nephew. And there's another lady in the party, Miss Wallis of Savannah. The beautiful Miss Wallis. Great belle. Ever heard of her?"

"No," said Miss Penny.

"Handsome young woman. Daughter of Judge Wallis. Man of reputation, Judge Wallis. Nothing wrong with Miss Wallis's health. She's only taking her pleasure, with Miss Fish for a—a—*chaperone*. That's what they call it. Yes!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WARNING.

MISS PENNY, still wondering at herself, somewhat, entered the hotel. It was the first time she had crossed the threshold of any dwelling in Briarville, so little

leisure had her life afforded; but the gay parlor with its Japanese screens and gilded mirrors, repeating indefinitely the fantastic chairs and sofas, made little impression upon this sunburned woman of the fields, who still felt the shock she had received a little while before.

An elderly lady, most elaborately dressed, was standing near one of the windows the sole occupant of the room. She turned as Miss Penny entered with the Doctor, and fixed a coldly scrutinizing gaze upon her.

"Miss Fish," whispered the Doctor. Then he advanced, holding out his hand, "Good morning, again, Miss Fish?" he said affably.

"Good morning," returned Miss Fish, giving her hand unwillingly. She disliked shaking hands with "the mob of the redeemed."

"I've brought Miss Lancaster," said Dr. Griffith, expectant of appreciation.

Miss Fish bowed, the stiffest of bows; Miss Lancaster made an obeisance she had learned she knew not where, but she hoped it was the right thing.

At this moment, the lady Miss Penny had seen in the carriage came into the room, both hands outstretched. "Ah, here you are, dear Doctor!" she exclaimed graciously, in a voice like a low-toned flute. She was even handsomer than she had seemed in the carriage; a tall, dark woman, with a rich pallor—so to speak—enhanced by the deep red of her lips, and the gem-like shining of her dark eyes. She had the bearing of a queen, while every movement was instinct with easy grace.

Miss Penny, as she gazed, understood, for the first time, her Uncle Joe's continually recurring regret that Marjorie had not been sent to her mother's kindred. Marjorie was beautiful too; Marjorie, with equal opportunity, might have had the ease, the grace, the indescribable charm the world calls style; but the farm-reared Marjorie was *a rustic*; and Miss Penny sighed.

"And have you brought us that wonderful woman?" Miss Wallis was saying. "Oh, I beg your pardon! *This* is Miss Lancaster? I am very pleased to meet you! I hope you have recovered from your fright? Won't you shake hands? My name is Anastasia Wallis."

The tears rushed to Miss Penny's eyes, as she took

the proffered hand. "I don't know" she answered, confusedly. "I was some considerable startled."

"Surely she must have been," thought Dr. Griffith, with a puzzled look.

Miss Wallis seemed about to speak again, but suddenly broke away from them, and ran out into the hall, crying :

"Harry ! Harry ! Pray come in here ?"

In another moment, she returned, accompanied by a tall, slender, fair-haired young man, whom Dr. Griffith immediately introduced to Miss Penny as "Mr. Fish."

"*Mr. Fish !*" exclaimed Miss Wallis, laughing. "That comes of Miss Fish always introducing Harry as "my nephew, Harry."

Miss Fish looked annoyed, and murmured something about the privilege of an old and intimate friend to be considered one of the family.

"Miss Fish is very good," said the young man, joining the laugh, "to adopt me as she does ; but my name is Kenric, Doctor."

The Doctor started violently back, as if he had received a blow, and stood rigid, his jaw dropped, his arms extended by his sides, and his fists clenched. An instant, swift, unreasoning dislike of this goodly young fellow took possession of him ; the old bitter jealousy of Morrison Kenric was ready to rage anew, under the ashes of years.

But Miss Penny was dominated by a strange calm. She heard as one hears in a dream, with a vague wonder, but with no surprise ; even it seemed to her quite in the natural order of things that she should meet the son of her old friend at last—for neither she nor Dr. Griffith needed to be told that this was Morrison Kenric's son, though he bore no resemblance to his father, except in his smile. "I am glad to see you," she said, in slow, measured words that came not of her own seeking, and her voice had to her an alien sound ; for she herself was far away, in another time, another place, bidding farewell to Morrison Kenric on the bleak roadside in the murky dawn, dangers besetting her, and a fate she had voluntarily invoked, worse than death, awaiting her at her journey's end. And for all this, she was forgotten ! Her name awoke no recol-

lection in the son of the man for whom she had taken risks so fearful. This bitter thought brought her violently back to the present, as she heard Harry Kenric saying :

"How astonished you look, Doctor ! What is the matter ? "

But the Doctor had caught from Miss Penny a warning glance, as if by intuition, for his eyes did not meet hers ; and comprehending that she desired no revelations, he replied, with clumsy tact :

"Unusual name. Very. *Thought* your name was Fish. Beg pardon. Hem ! "

"My father's name is Morrison Kenric," pursued Harry, eagerly. "He was in the South when quite a young man, and also during the war. You may have met him ? "

"Hem ! " said the Doctor again, with a miserable consciousness of Miss Penny's eyes that he had not the courage to meet. "Sure I should have remembered if I had met him during the war. Name so unusual. Hem ! "

"Yes, the name is unusual," murmured Miss Fish, with her eyes on Miss Penny ; but Miss Penny saw only the eyes of Morrison Kenric's son, who looked at her inquiringly but with no recognition.

Miss Wallis, who also had been studying Miss Penny's face now rescued the company from an awkward pause. "How I should like to visit that farm of yours, Miss Lancaster ! " she exclaimed gayly. "Have you little chickens, and pigs, and calves, and all those dear, rustic delights ? "

"Anastasia, you are absurd," said Miss Fish, stiffly.

"Anastasia is always absurd," Miss Wallis made answer, with a slight uplifting of the brows directed at Dr. Griffith. "I shock Miss Fish, Doctor. She thinks my mamma cannot have been sufficiently rigid with me."

"And where is your mother ? " Miss Penny asked, abruptly.

Miss Wallis colored, and paused an instant before replying ;

"My mother has been some years dead. It is Miss Fish who keeps me in order now," she added laughing.

There followed some talk about the climate of Briarville, the growth of the town, the market-garden business of which Miss Lancaster was the pioneer, some praise and some condemnation of the hotel, some hint of a desire for the quiet of the country—and then Miss Penny and the Doctor came away.

They walked some distance in silence, but when they were under the trees of the little pleasure-ground, apart from the crowd, Miss Penny stood still and confronted the Doctor with the question:

“Do you really think that young man would be the better for living on my farm?”

The Doctor looked at the ground, and he looked at Miss Penny, and he pulled his dingy beard. “About that young man? Ye-es,” the answer came slowly.

“About yourself—” He shrugged his shoulders.

“Oh, don’t you see how plain is, it not one of ’em knows who I am?” she cried out bitterly. “I am so utterly forgotten, that it is the same as if he were indeed a stranger!”

Her old friend put out his hand in wordless sympathy but she thrust it from her brusquely, not knowing that she hurt him, as she continued with vehemence:

“And do me this favor; keep my secret!”

“It shall be as you wish, Penny,” he answered, sighing. “But wherefore bring the past back into your life at all?”

“Oh, I can take care of myself,” she replied, impatiently.

“It isn’t that, Penny! But—I swear I don’t understand you!” he declared, fiercely.

“Well, never mind,” Miss Penny sighed. How was it possible to make him understand what was inexplicable to herself, the strange mixture of sweet and bitter, tenderness and resentment, that directed her actions?

It was late when Miss Penny returned to her home that day, and Marjorie, who stood on the little porch, watching for her, chided her affectionately.

“I was afraid something had befallen you,” she said; “we’ve had dinner so long ago. But I’ve kept yours hot.”

“Oh, child,” cried Miss Penny, brokenly, “I don’t want dinner. Make me a cup of tea.”

She took the girl in her arms and burst into tears. This was the sole confession she could make that something had befallen, and Marjorie was sorely frightened. So far as Marjorie knew, tears were an impossibility for this strong, independent woman.

"You are ill!" she whispered, with tender solicitude. "Come, let me take you to your room and make you comfortable."

"Yes," sighed Miss Penny, "something *has* happened, dear child; but I don't know that anything 'll come of it. Some other time, maybe, I'll talk about it. I feel as if I had seen a ghost—a whole legion of 'em!"

She suffered herself to be led to her room and waited upon by this deft and gentle hand-maiden, but every kind office Marjorie performed cost Miss Penny a keen pang; for the obtrusive and distressing thought ever in her mind, was that she had defrauded this child of her birthright. There could have been no true home in Miss Penny's farm life without Marjorie; but what if her gain had been Marjorie's loss? Every time Miss Penny thought of Miss Anastasia Wallis, she sighed, and her sighs were almost groans. No wonder Marjorie thought her ill.

"Oh, Marjorie!" she cried, "what should I do without you?"

"You have been like a mother to me," Marjorie whispered, with fond caresses; but this declaration carried with it no power of consolation; for the vision of Anastasia Wallis was ever before Miss Penny's eyes, reproaching her that she had debarred Marjorie from those advantages she might have enjoyed among her mother's kindred.

Yet Miss Penny's conscience acquitted her of selfishness; it was love had prompted her when she declared to her Uncle Joe that she would never give up the child she had nursed back to life, a love that made all sacrifices easy for the sake of this motherless girl. And by the might of that love, by the extent of those sacrifices, Miss Penny had felt herself righteously entitled to absolute possession of her uncle's daughter. Was not the girl of her kindred also; and if of her kindred, wherefore should not Marjorie be hers? Thus did Miss Penny

strive to persuade herself against the morbid self-reproach that continually insisted upon Marjorie's claim to advantages this rustic life could never command. It was a life that fulfilled her own highest ambition ; but Marjorie, young, beautiful, bright, seemed entitled to hold a widely different position in the world. Something of the same feeling that made her revolt against Kenric's offer of marriage, years ago, as unsuited to him and to her, possessed her now. She had not hesitated to refuse Kenric ; but could she give up Marjorie ? "It must be that I am growing old," thought Miss Penny ; "my strength of purpose deserts me."

None of the sermons she had heard preached with sonorous strength by the severe theologians of the hill-country, none of the long, agonizing prayers she had heard offered with fervent groans, seemed to touch her case even remotely. She had sinned against a helpless child, though she had sinned ignorantly ; what should be the measure of her repentance ? What the extent of her reparation ?

For Miss Penny was an honest soul, a thoroughly just woman. In the morbid view of her relations towards Marjorie she had suddenly been led to take, she could not deceive herself with the argument that the girl was happy in her simple, rural life, far happier, perhaps, than she might be in that other life she had missed : the fact remained that that other life, whatever the fruits it might have borne, was the life of which Marjorie had been deprived. And Miss Penny accounted herself the instrument by which this had been accomplished ; for well she knew that many a time her uncle Joe would have opened communication with his wife's relatives, on behalf of Marjorie, had she not restrained him. And oh ! bitterest pang of all ! Marjorie must learn the truth some day, and when she should come to feel the contrast between her life as it was, and her life as it might have been, then would Miss Penny meet her punishment in the girl's alienated affection. Now, therefore, what did it behoove her to do ?

"Marjorie," said Miss Penny, half-choking with the question she was about to put as a test, "do you—do you ever think of your mother's kindred ?"

Marjorie was startled ; she colored painfully, hesi-

tated, but feeling Miss Penny's eyes full upon her, she answered faintly, "Sometimes."

"And do you ever wish for them, wish to be with them?" Miss Penny asked with painful anxiety.

Marjorie was silent, and Miss Penny, seeing the tears in her eyes, grew faint with anguish. "Yes!" she exclaimed, bitterly. "It is but natural."

"Forgive me!" cried Marjorie. "Oh, forgive me! Do not think I could wish to leave you. Do not, do not think that. Why do you ask me such a question? What have you seen this day? What have you heard of my mother's kindred?"

"Nothing child; I know nothing of them. But I have seen a girl to-day—she is older than you—brought up as you might have been, if your mother's kindred had taken you. They are different people from us."

Marjorie had turned very pale, and she stood clasping her hands tightly as if to subdue her agitation; but as she spoke, her color rose. "I could never have left my Daddy Joe," she declared. "Never! Never! What more need be said about it?"

Miss Penny turned away; she could not resist a little pang of unreasonable jealousy, but with it there mingled a repentant tenderness for her uncle, and a great yearning to comfort him. She could not forget that it was she who had restrained him when he would have secured for Marjorie the recognition and protection of her mother's family; it was she who was responsible for any trouble of mind he might have suffered on this account. Her heart went out towards the simple, childish old man, idly scraping his fiddle in the vine-shadowed porch, and she rose up from the bed where, in sheer exhaustion of mind and spirits she had consented to lie, and pushing away Marjorie's hands that were lightly rubbing her aching head, she said:

"I must go down and see my Uncle Joe, Marjorie. I am going to take a boarder; I must tell him about it."

"A boarder?" repeated Marjorie, aghast.

"Yes," said Miss Penny, sharply—she was never pleased to have her decisions called in question in any way—"every one takes boarders about here; why should not I?"

Marjorie said nothing, but she felt that she had a clew

to Miss Penny's unwonted depression : there must surely be something amiss in the finances, she thought, to necessitate such a step as taking a boarder, and she resolved to save every cent she made from her bee-hives and her flowers.

Miss Penny, little suspecting the impression her announcement had made, went downstairs to speak to her Uncle Joe. The sight of him beguiling his idleness with spasmodic music touched her deepest heart ; she understood, now, the long regret that haunted him, for it was akin to her own. Urged by an irresistible impulse of sympathy, she put her arms around his neck and kissed him. She was a middle-aged woman, now, sun-burned, gray, and wrinkled, and there was no grace nor beauty in her to add charm to a caress, save the infinite, unspeakable, repentant tenderness that overwhelmed her heart.

Miss Penny was not usually so demonstrative, and Mr. Joe was taken by surprise. "Lord, Penthesilea !" cried he, with a violent start, "what on earth's the matter?" And as he rose, tremblingly to his feet, his violin slipped from his grasp and dropped to the floor. With an exclamation of distress, Mr. Joe snatched it up, and examined it with great anxiety.

"It's cracked !" he said, in a broken voice, that trembled on the verge of tears. "A bad sign, Penthesilea ; a bad sign," he whispered, fearfully

Miss Penny all her life had cherished too strong a faith in herself to be moved by omens, whether of good or ill ; but now she was in a mood that made her keenly alive to all depressing influences. "Heaven help us !" she ejaculated, involuntarily.

Mr. Joe held the cracked fiddle in his arms, and caressed it as though it had been some sentient thing—as perhaps he half believed it was. "Forty years. Forty years," he repeated, plaintively. "I never had anything dearer except my wife, and Marjorie. Penthesilea, what does it mean?" he queried, helplessly.

"It can be mended," said Miss Penny, rallying her shaken spirits ; but Mr. Joe shook his head.

"Then you shall have another," she declared.

"It wouldn't be the same," he objected, sadly.

"Forty years. Forty years."

Miss Penny was greatly distressed.

"Cost what it may, Uncle Joe," she said, "it shall be mended. But let us forget it for a little, now ; I've come to tell you something."

"Is it bad news, Penthesilea? Bad news?" he asked, with a piteous tremor.

"I am going to take a boarder," Miss Penny announced.

"Ah," he replied, brightening. "That may be well. Room to spare ; even you *might* take several, Penthesilea. Yes, yes ! That's management. It ain't a woman, is it? They are mighty apt to give trouble, you know."

"No ; it is a young man—the son of Morrison Kenric."

Mr. Lancaster threw up his hands with an inarticulate cry, and Miss Penny saved the fiddle a second fall.

"Marjorie's kin ! Marjorie's kin !" he cried shrilly. "They've come for Marjorie."

"Hush ! oh, hush," exclaimed Miss Penny, the sharpness of the surprise awaking all her caution. "Would you have Marjorie know it?"

"No, no ! You reckon best not, don't you, Penthesilea?" said he, appealingly. "You always was against telling her, and now you'll help me keep the secret, won't you ! She don't know ; I never told her ; and now I don't want her to know."

"But Mr. Kenric and his son, do they not know?" Miss Penny asked.

"No, no ; that is impossible !" replied her uncle, fretfully. "Unless I tell 'em they can't know. And I ain't goin' to tell 'em. When Marjorie was young enough to be sent to school, you wouldn't let me, and now I won't. Nobody knows but me ; it was just my surprise made me say they had come for her. They don't know. But, Penthesilea, you ain't bound to take a boarder?"

"Yes," Miss Penny answered, with her accustomed decision ; "I am bound to take this one, for Providence sent him ; I did not seek him. But—we need not tell Marjorie—perhaps we need never tell her."

Mr. Joe caressed his fiddle, and sadly shook his head.

"A bad sign," he murmured, plaintively. "*Quem deus vult perdere*——"

"I don't understand Latin, you know, Uncle Joe,"

said Miss Penny impatiently ; “but I am not going to borrow trouble.” She did not pretend to understand why it comforted her to know that Morrison Kenric was Marjorie’s kindred, but she accepted the comfort thankfully.

A new and by no means pleasant experience awaited her, when she informed Memory Waits that she had decided to take Harry Kenric to board. He heard her with a look of indignant astonishment that Miss Penny could ill brook.

“And Marjorie?” he stammered, before he was aware.

It did not appease Miss Penny’s wrath that he colored guiltily. “Marjorie?” she repeated sharply. “What of Marjorie?”

But Memory could not put his forebodings into words : he left the discussion of Marjorie to present another aspect of the case. “Two trades is bad luck, Miss Lankster, I always hear tell,” said he. “It reminds me, sorter of that Latin Mr. Lankster talks, ’bout them the gods would destroy first loses their senses.”

His manner was respectful, but his words exasperated Miss Penny beyond bounds.

“Don’t preach my uncle’s Latin to me,” said she ; “and remember that I am mistress of my own place.” For the first time she was very angry with Memory Waits.

CHAPTER XXV.

MISS ANASTASIA WALLIS.

“I NEVER approved of the plan,” said Miss Fish, with vicious emphasis. “Never.” She had just returned from a visit to Miss Penny’s farm, where Harry Kenric had now been established some three weeks quite to his satisfaction. “From the moment I beheld that woman, I disapproved.”

“So did I,” said Miss Wallis. “I disapproved even before Dr. Griffith introduced Miss Lancaster to us. You remember I urged our leaving here.”

"And yet you have not a word to say against Harry's being domiciled with this woman?"

"She has a name," said Miss Wallis, with a slight frown of annoyance; "Let us call her Miss Lancaster. As to Harry being an inmate of her house, that is his affair altogether. I assure you I never mean to oppose our friend Harry."

"I admire your wisdom, Anastasia. In your position it would be most *ungraceful*, to say the least, to oppose Harry. But—I had expected you to use your influence. Harry is very young."

"He isn't so very much younger than I am," Miss Wallis remarked, quickly.

"But you are wise beyond your years, my dear!"

Miss Wallis lifted her hands as if in deprecation. They were very pretty hands, and she used them gracefully.

"I blame Dr. Griffith," pursued Miss Fish, with rhetorical indignation. "He ought to have perceived the shoals and quicksands before he guided Harry's bark into dangerous waters."

"Pray let us dispense with metaphor, my dear Miss Fish. To be plain, then?"

"To be plain—there is a girl."

Miss Wallis burst out laughing. "How fearfully tragic; But I admit there is always a possible tragedy where there is a girl concerned."

"I suppose, for Harry's sake, you wouldn't object to going out there? I mean to board?" Miss Fish asked, with some eagerness.

"I should object, most decidedly," replied Miss Wallis, coloring vividly.

"My dear Anastasia, the rooms are better than these we have here, and Harry commends the fare," said Miss Fish, in a tone of remonstrance.

"You would die of the isolation," Miss Wallis declared.

"I am not selfish," sighed Miss Fish. "I've been a friend of the Morrisons and the Kenrics from my youth up, and I feel that I owe a duty to Morrison's boy. If I can stand a few weeks of isolation for Harry's sake, I am sure you might."

The two ladies were alone in the parlor of the hotel.

Miss Wallis rose and stood by the remotest window, looking out upon the street ; and Miss Fish, seeing that no reply was forthcoming, announced defiantly :

“I’ve engaged rooms there, anyway !”

“Ah? You’ve gone so far as that?” said Miss Wallis reproachfully, as she came back from the window.

“You would force me to be a spy upon Harry Kenric?”

“I wish you would not use such expressions, Anastasia ! *You* need not trouble yourself about Harry, if you do not choose ; but *I* am actuated by a sense of duty.”

Miss Wallis smiled but said nothing. She returned to the window and stood there, as if lost in thought.

“Am I to understand that you consent to go to Miss Lancaster’s?” Miss Fish asked, at last. “We may as well make ready for the move.”

“And if I refuse?” said Miss Wallis.

“I am capable of going to Miss Lancaster’s without you!” Miss Fish declared recklessly.

“And leave me here in this hotel?”

“I should write and state the case explicitly to Judge Wallis.”

Miss Wallis laughed. “Poor, dear papa ! He thought he had settled Anastasia comfortably for the summer, when he arranged with Miss Fish to take charge of her. And Anastasia thought, by the terms of the arrangement, that *her* wishes were to be consulted.”

“I should be very sorry indeed,”—Miss Fish began, but Miss Wallis interrupted :

“Yes ; it would be hard on you, Miss Fish, to forfeit the pretty little plum papa pays you—”

“Miss Wallis ! I——”

“Ah, forgive me !” cried Anastasia, contritely. “I was vexed. Why should I refuse to go to Miss Lancaster’s to board ? On the whole, I think it will be an admirable plan. I withdraw my objections. Let us go, by all means !”

She came and stood before Miss Fish, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling, evidently under the influence of some subdued excitement.

“I don’t understand you !” stammered Miss Fish.

“No,” said Anastasia, soberly ; “you couldn’t, unless you had known me as a little girl.”

She paused abruptly, colored, toyed a moment with her bracelets, of which she wore an unusual number ; then, dropping her hands, she said, smiling :

“As a child, I was always fond of playing with fire.”

Miss Fish gave her a blank look.

“I delighted in taking risks,” Miss Wallis explained, enigmatically.

Still Miss Fish stared, blankly.

“I think I was meant for an adventuress!” Miss Wallis declared.

“*Anastasia!*” cried Miss Fish, horrified.

Anastasia burst out laughing. “‘There is no armor against fate,’” she quoted gayly. “Since you wish it, dear Miss Fish, let us take up our abode at Miss Lancaster’s. It will be *very interesting*, I haven’t a doubt.”

“I’m sure *I* don’t want to go there,” Miss Fish declared, in an injured tone. “I never was on a farm longer than a few moments, in all my life.”

“Then you shall have a new experience.”

“I shall have a very disagreeable experience, I dare say. Do you know who that woman is? That Miss Lancaster?”

“Yes,” answered Miss Wallis, examining her bracelets with an abstracted air ; but the next moment she looked up smiling and said, “She is a woman whom every one seems to hold in high esteem.”

“I see you *don’t* know,” said Miss Fish, with a cautious glance over her shoulder to make sure there were no listeners. “When Dr. Griffith introduced her, I knew I had met her before. It came to me, all at once, that she is the same person Harry’s father took a sort of philanthropic fancy to, in that obscure Georgia town, before the war.”

Miss Wallis colored, but said nothing.

“It was in a milliner’s shop, in Savannah, that we encountered her,” continued Miss Fish, “the winter we went South for Alice’s health,—Harry’s mother, you know—The meeting was altogether accidental and unexpected, and Morrison made a great demonstration over her. I pointed out to Alice that it was not altogether becoming to take so much notice of a milliner’s

girl, and she never liked to hear about her afterwards. She exacted a promise of Morrison that he would never speak to Harry about this Penny Lancaster. Poor Alice ! It was all philanthropy on Morrison's part, of course. I dare say he has told you about it ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Miss Wallis briefly.

“ But I have always considered that Morrison made an escape,” continued Miss Fish. “ You may be sure *she* did her best. And she wouldn't be a woman if she didn't try to pay off old scores by marrying *that girl* to Morrison's son.”

“ And his father would not be pleased,” said Miss Wallis, slowly.

“ ‘ Would not be pleased ’ is a very mild term,” Miss Fish replied. “ For my part—”

“ For my part,” interrupted Miss Wallis, with spirit, “ it is the girl I am concerned for. I've seen her ; she has the look of a heart-breaking constancy.”

“ Don't let us indulge in *sentiment*,” said Miss Fish, coldly, “ The girl is like all the rest of her class, no doubt. A little flattery will turn her head.”

“ So it does not break her heart,” murmured Miss Wallis ; but Miss Fish did not hear her. She was leaving the room, when Miss Wallis called her back. “ One moment, please, Miss Fish ! Has she—Miss Lancaster, said anything about—about her early acquaintance with Mr. Kenric ? ”

“ Certainly not,” replied Miss Fish haughtily. “ I do not invite impertinent confidences.”

“ That is true,” Miss Wallis assented. “ But there is Harry—He is not forbidding—” She glanced at Miss Fish with a gleam of furtive amusement in her handsome eyes.

But Miss Fish's faith in her own immaculate perfection rendered her obtuse ; she replied, with serene satisfaction :

“ So far, she has not enlightened Harry. Doubtless she has her own reasons for silence.”

“ Let us give her credit for some native dignity,” Miss Wallis pleaded, with feeling, “ some inborn delicacy. She comes of the Donalds ; and I have heard my mother say there is no better blood in Georgia.”

Miss Fish stared. “ I am at a loss to understand you,

Anastasia," she said, coldly. "But as we are to leave here, I would suggest that it is time we were making our preparations."

Thus it came to pass that Miss Penny, having three large rooms she did not need to use, found herself, rather to her own surprise, with three boarders in her house. They did not, however, interrupt in the least the methodical routine of the farm. Their meals were served them at their own hours, for they could never have conformed to Miss Penny's hours; and they came and went as suited their pleasure. In the morning they read, or wrote letters in the rustic pavilion that Memory Waits had erected on Marjorie's lawn, or they lounged on the new broad piazza Miss Penny had recently built, just under the cherry-trees, and overlooking the garden. In the afternoon they drove, for Harry Kenric kept his horses and a little wagon in Miss Penny's stable. They did not seek the society of the strangers visiting Briarville, Miss Fish pretended that the absolute rest and quiet of country life was essential to her own health; but Miss Wallis made no pretence whatever; she had an unusual capacity for finding enjoyment in any environment, and the happy gift of making herself acceptable to people everywhere. When she discovered that Mr. Lancaster was disconsolate about his disabled fiddle, she bought a guitar and sang for him until he was almost consoled for the loss of his own music. She followed Memory Waits about the farm, and delighted his bucolic soul with the admiration she evinced for his knowledge of "all out doors," as she largely phrased it; she helped Marjorie feed the chickens, she helped Miss Penny shell the beans for dinner, but she left Harry Kenric to the tender mercies of Miss Fish.

Miss Fish was very devoted to that young man. She played chess with him by the hour; but sometimes Miss Fish needed repose, and what went on when she was recruiting her powers she never knew; she hoped Anastasia was taking her place. At the end of two weeks, Miss Fish began to find the life she led at Lancaster's Farm intolerably tedious; but when she complained Miss Wallis only laughed.

"If I could but understand Harry!" Miss Fish lamented. "However it isn't altogether in vain that I

came. I suppose you have remarked this great oaf of a farm hand—”

“Foreman of the crop,” suggested Miss Wallis, with demure humor.

“Well, if that’s his title!” impatiently. “He has set his affections on this girl.”

“Propinquity,” said Miss Wallis.

“I shall encourage the idea,” Miss Fish declared.

“Pray do not!” entreated Miss Wallis, impulsively; but when Miss Fish asked “Why not?” she had no reason to give. “The uncouth creature has a heart, I find,” was her somewhat irrelevant answer. “Ah, Miss Fish, there is a great drama going on here, if only you knew how to watch it,” she added, earnestly.

“There is great folly going on!” Miss Fish retorted, sourly. Miss Wallis sighed.

“The girl is too pretty.” Miss Fish declared, with energetic disapproval.

“She has a face like a Madonna!” Miss Wallis assented with enthusiasm.

“She has a face like Laura Dent,” said Miss Fish, bitterly. “It’s a kind of face I always distrust.”

Miss Wallis colored. “If Laura Dent had a face like that,” she said, in a low voice, as if speaking to herself, “no wonder Harry’s father loved her.”

“Oh, it didn’t amount to a row of pins. A boyish fancy that did not interfere with Morrison’s marrying wisely at last.”

“I have heard the marriage was not happy,” Miss Wallis remarked, provokingly. She knew that Miss Fish had been mainly instrumental in the match.

It was a question Miss Fish did not care to discuss.

“I shall write to Harry’s father!” she declared peevishly. “I shall insist upon his presence here.”

“That he may renew his pristine devotion to Miss Lancaster? And be brought face to face with the likeness of his early love? How romantic you are, Miss Fish!”

“Don’t be absurd, Anastasia! An ordinary woman-farmer?”

“*Not* ordinary,” said Miss Wallis, with heightened color, as she rose and went to the window overlooking Marjorie’s lawn. “She is no ordinary character, be

sure ! Ah, there go Marjorie and Harry to gather flowers for the bouquets. Idyllic employment ! And Memory Waits in the background like a dark shadow. *Commedia a soggetto*, eh, Miss Fish ? ”

“ My dear,” said Miss Fish, with solemn adjuration, “ it is your *duty* to go and join them.”

“ Excuse me ! ” replied Miss Wallis, gayly. “ It is my pleasure just now to go and talk to Miss Lancaster.”

“ Anastasia ! Anastasia ! ” Miss Fish called after her, indignantly. “ You know that I am not equal to the fatigue—”

But Anastasia was gone.

Shyness was not natural to Anastasia Wallis, and yet that was the feeling with which Miss Penny had inspired her : but the more she saw of the mistress of the farm, the more irresistibly was she attracted to her ; and when the idea suggested itself that Harry’s father might visit the farm, might renew the romantic friendship of his youth, she was seized with the overmastering desire to hear from Miss Penny’s own lips some revelation of her early life ; moreover, she craved Miss Penny’s sympathy in her own case.

Miss Penny was seated on a bench under the cherry-trees. There were seats in every shady spot about the farm, for Miss Penny, when she had time to sit down, preferred the open air. She had a big needle with a long thread, and she was stringing peppers. The sun was low in the west, but she still wore her broad-brimmed hat.

“ How you do love to work ! ” said Anastasia, with a timidity she never felt in a ball-room, or at a dinner-party.

“ Blessed be they who love to work ! ” Miss Penny responded, as though she were reciting the ritual of industry.

“ Weariness of the flesh is an antidote for weariness of the spirit, so they tell us,” said Anastasia, as she sat down, on the other end of the bench, without waiting to be invited. “ Dr. Griffith has told us about your ‘ pluck,’ as men call it, in starting this farm of yours ; it is as interesting as a romance.”

Dr. Griffith knows all my history," said Miss Penny, with suppressed wrath ; " but I wouldn't have suspected him of telling it to strangers."

" Indeed, you do him wrong ! He told us only of the farm. I did not even imagine that he knew anything of you until he came here. He said he found you here.

Miss Penny turned her head away, and her hat concealed her face. A little she was amused, a little she was touched. " There is nothing to be ashamed of in my life," she said ; " but there are some things it pains me to remember."

" Was it a very eventful story ?" Miss Wallis ventured.

" Oh—I had my ups and downs," Miss Penny answered, plying her big needle.

" Do you know, Miss Lancaster," I wonder you never married ? Weren't you ever in love ?" Anastasia asked impetuously.

" Yes," said Miss Penny, with a slow smile ; " oftener than once."

" Do tell me about it ?" Anastasia entreated drawing nearer, and putting her hand within Miss Penny's arm.

" My first love," said Miss Penny, busily stringing peppers, and giving no heed to the hand within her arm, " was a baby-girl, the child of one of my sisters."

" Yes," said Anastasia, withdrawing her hand. " And—what became of her ?"

" She passed out of my life," replied Miss Penny, simply ; " and after a while God granted me to forget her."

" But, you know, that is not the love I mean," said Anastasia, lightly. " I mean—*real love*."

" That was as real as any I ever felt," Miss Penny declared.

Miss Wallis made a movement as if she would put her hand within Miss Penny's arm again, but restrained herself. " But—a lover's love," she said. " I am in a mood to hear a thrilling story."

Miss Penny gave her a quick, keen glance. " I lived

my life as it came," said she, briefly. "Most of us do." If Miss Wallis had heard her story, as perhaps she had, from Morrison Kenric, there was no need for its repetition, Miss Penny thought.

"And—have you been happy?"

"Fairly so," replied Miss Penny, tying her second string of peppers.

"You don't want to tell me, I see," said Anastasia; "but you seem such a strong woman. I don't mean *bodily* strength; that is not uncommon, but I mean the strength of character that can be relied upon, that can give support to others. I am not asking for advice; I shouldn't be willing to take it; but it is a relief to talk to some one, and I can't talk to Miss Fish; she wouldn't understand. Pray tell me, Miss Lancaster, did you ever love any one so that you could *commit* a *meanness* for the sake of that love?"

Miss Penny started. She dropped her needle and the peppers together, and clasped her hands. Her face was very pale, Anastasia noticed.

"Once," she said, in a half whisper. "Once I loved some one well enough to have lived a lie of a lifetime for his sake."

"I hate a lie," said Anastasia, in a low voice. "And a lifetime lie—" she ended with a shudder.

"God spared me that martyrdom," said Miss Penny, with a long sigh.

"But—please don't mind my questions," Miss Wallis went on; "you do not know how deeply this interests me. Why didn't you marry him you loved?"

"He did not love me," Miss Penny answered, calmly.

"And you have lived single for his sake?"

"No!" said Miss Penny, with quick indignation. "I've lived single for the sake of my farm."

"My mother died when I was still a young girl," said Miss Wallis, after a pause; "and I am not a young girl any longer, as you need not be told. I have had a number of offers, and I have been several times engaged to be married, but I found out, every time, that it wasn't love, and I began to think there could be no such thing for me, until—until, at last the great experience came! It is a new existence, my old self is swept away—"

"In the gathering dusk, Miss Penny went on stringing her peppers with a desperate industry. Anastasia saw that her hands trembled. Presently, she turned to Miss Wallis, and with fierce vehemence of utterance, said to her ;

"Do you think I am over-ready to lay bare my life? I have told you what I never yet have told any human being. I have told you because I want you to know that though my hands are hard with toil which is my portion in this world I have a heart as well as those who rustle in silk and glitter in jewels. I have balked at nothing for some I have loved, and my reward is—oblivion."

With an involuntary gesture, Miss Wallis put up her hands and turned her face away ; she could not bear the lightning of Miss Penny's eyes.

"Where is Marjorie?" said Miss Penny, impatiently, as she gathered up her basket.

"Marjorie is in the pavilion, making up her bouquets," Miss Wallis answered ; and after a moment's pause, she added, "Harry Kenric is helping her."

"Marjorie is a child!" said Miss Penny, sharply.

"No," replied Miss Wallis, gently ; "she was a child five weeks ago : Marjorie to-day is a woman, though she does not know it yet."

Miss Penny lifted up her voice and called, "Mar—jorie Lan—cas—ter?" as she went around the corner of the house. It sounded like the wail of a Banshee.

From the place where she sat, Anastasia could see the orchard on the slope dim in the evening shadows. The wind was in the boughs of the cherry-trees, and the scent of new mown hay was on the air. The crickets shrilled in the grass, and far away upon the hillside a whip-poor-will was calling, and slowly above the belt of woodland rose the moon. All things breathed of peace and rest.

"But in my heart there is neither peace nor rest," said Anastasia bitterly. "All my life I have hated deception ; and now I have not the courage to be true. Oh, my love ! my love ! I who would be all that is estimable in your eyes, I am a fraud, and I despise myself, because I dare not tell you who I really am !

CHAPTER XXVI.

MEMORY REMONSTRATES.

MARJORIE, when she heard Miss Penny's voice, started like a guilty creature ; and yet, wherein was the wrong of accepting Harry Kenric's assistance in making up her bouquets ? It was not a thing forbidden, though the work would certainly have progressed more rapidly without his aid, for not half the bouquets were yet tied up, and Marjorie knew that Memory Waits had by this time packed the cart that carried the vegetables.

She sprang up from the bench where she was at work, and ran out of the pavilion, leaving her flowers behind her. How like a woodland nymph she looked, thought Harry, as she went flying across the lawn.

Miss Penny was in the big, open store-room at the end of the long gallery, a room reserved for all such impedimenta of the farm as could not find fit place in the barn. Here were the baskets for packing vegetables and fruit, the cans for milk, the balls of twine, the watering-pots and hose, the lanterns, the pruning-shears ; and here hung Miss Penny's big hat and leather gloves, when they were not in wearing. The middle of this room was occupied by a large, square table, to the centre of which was screwed a tall lamp ; but the lamp was not lighted, and Miss Penny's figure was dimly outlined in the dusk. Miss Penny preferred to have it so : in certain states of feeling the dark is not only soothing, it is a desirable screen. Miss Penny's deeds were not evil that she should shun the light, yet her conscience was holding her severely to account. In consenting to receive Harry Kenric as an inmate, she had acted upon impulse, an impulse born of that old, early devotion to the young man's father, which, in spite of the intervening years, in spite of the bitterness of feeling herself consigned to oblivion, still held sway in Miss Penny's heart. When Miss Fish and Miss Wallis became part of her

household, she accepted them as a necessary consequence of receiving Harry Kenric. Of Marjorie she had not thought at all, for Marjorie was to her a child. Memory Waits had indeed given her an intimation that Marjorie was of an age to be considered, but in Miss Penny's estimation Memory was no competent judge of her actions, and she had resented his note of warning as an impertinence. But now she saw with her own eyes, and she was sore disturbed.

Marjorie came in panting, her soft hair blown around her flushed face, her eyes aglow, as might be seen, even in that dusky light, but they drooped and could not meet Miss Penny's reproving look.

"Marjorie," said Miss Penny, "you are no longer a child." It was not at all what she had meant to say, and she was vexed with herself for using Miss Wallis's words, and still more vexed that she could not resist the force of them, and her tone was harsher than she had ever yet used towards Marjorie. "You waste your time."

Marjorie knew that in Miss Penny's estimation the waste of time was a crime. She clasped her slender brown hands nervously, and faltered ;

"But I cannot prevent Mr. Kenric's coming to help about the flowers."

"Hinder, you mean," said Miss Penny, tartly. Don't excuse yourself by laying the blame on others, Marjorie ; that is something I never do. Where are the bouquets ?"

Marjorie started. She had been speaking of the flowers, but she had utterly forgotten the bouquets, and there were so few of them ! She did not know how it was that it took so long to make them when Mr. Kenric helped, and yet the time seemed so short ! "I left them in the pavilion," she stammered. "I will go for them."

"No," said Miss Penny, with a detaining hand on the young girl's arm, that was almost fierce in its grasp ; "I will go myself."

Marjorie left alone in the dusky room, sat down beside the table, pained, bewildered, almost frightened. She put her hand upon her heart to still its beating, and the tears came into her eyes.

Miss Wallis was right ; Marjorie did not yet know that

she was no more a child ; the Princess still slept, but she had begun to dream. She sat quite still, living over the scene in the pavilion, feeling Harry Kenric's eyes upon her, thrilling at the accidental touch—she thought it accidental—of his fingers among the flowers, and wondering, half in joy, and more than half in fear, at the change that seemed to be stealing over all things. She did not hear Memory Wait's heavy step upon the piazza, she was not conscious of his presence in the room until he spoke.

"Ye air late with your flowers, Marjorie," he said, in a tone of cold rebuke. "Ye've been mostly late these days."

Marjorie's heart ached. She had not the spirit to retort that it made not the slightest difference whether the flowers went into the cart then, or waited until morning. She could only wonder dumbly why it was that everyone seemed in a league to condemn her—even Daddy Joe, would not he too speak coldly to her, if he knew how she had trifled away her time? True, Daddy Joe did not take much account of time, himself, sitting idle in cozy nooks. The thought of him now pierced Marjorie's heart. She had been wont to seek her dear daddy when she made up her bouquets, to spend the twilight hour of rest with him ; but for days and days, now, she had forgotten him ! How lonely and sad he must have been, missing her !

With this thought, she rose up quickly to go to him.

"Don't ye go, Marjorie," said Memory Waits. "I got somethin' to say." As he spoke, he drew a match across the toe of his heavy shoe, and lighted the lamp. For Memory Waits had nothing to hide, and he was keen to see Marjorie's face.

It was a face touching in its pallor that the light illumined, and the anger burning in the heart of this son of the soil gave place to a passionate tenderness that shook him from head to foot, and trembled in his voice.

"What ails ye, Marjorie? he asked.

"Nothing ails me," Marjorie answered, resentment coming to her aid : Memory's anger grieved her ; his tenderness was a shock. "Can't I rest when I'm tired?"

"Ye air not yourself lately," said Memory, with gloom. "Strangers have done it ! Ye air tired of the

farm and farm life ; ye hanker after city ways, and—
and—city folks.”

“It is not true !” said Marjorie, tremulously. “I love the farm ; I love every inch of it. It is my home where I have been so happy.”

“Oh, Marjorie !” Memory Waits shaded his eyes with his hands, and his breath came in quick sighs. A few weeks ago Marjorie would have asked him frankly if he were ill, but now she was silent.

“Don’t put your faith in strangers, Marjorie, *don’t*,” he said presently, with a sort of stern entreaty. “How do ye know”—but he broke off abruptly.

“Strangers ?” repeated Marjorie, with her hand to her head. “Strangers ?” Was Harry Kenric, then, a *stranger* ? He seemed to her no more a stranger than Daddy Joe, hardly so much a stranger as her strenuous cousin Penthesilea.

“Trust old friends, Marjorie ; old friends are best,” he said, eagerly.

“Trust old friends !” sighed Marjorie, with a heavenly smile. “You are an old friend, Memory ; I trust you fully.”

It was an inspiration of divinest pity that prompted this speech, and yet Marjorie did not know that she pitied Memory Waits ; she only knew that she was uneasy in his presence, and she went out quickly to seek her Daddy Joe.

Memory made no further attempt to detain her ; he looked after her frowning, as with a deep sigh he sat down and drew from his pocket a little worn Bible, wherein after long turning of the leaves, he fell upon this passage in the Psalms :

“I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them : neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

“I have wounded them that they were not able to rise : they are fallen under my feet.

For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle : thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies ; that I might destroy them that hate me.

They cried but there was none to save them : even unto the Lord, but he answered them not.

And as he read, he was comforted, his despondency gave way to a fierce, exultant, yet subdued joy.

Marjorie found her Daddy Joe sitting disconsolate in the corner of the vine-embowered porch that fronted the road. The moon had not yet risen high enough to give light to that side of the house, and Mr. Lancaster sat in shadow; but just beyond, the shimmer of silvery light fell across the lawn and the flower-borders, and in the pavilion Marjorie could see two figures dimly outlined, and she knew they were Miss Penny and Harry Kenric.

"Why are they there so long?" she wondered, uneasily, as she went behind the old man's chair, and slipped her arms around his neck.

"Daddy Joe! Daddy Joe!" she whispered appealingly; for Marjorie craved comforting, she knew not wherefore.

"Why, Marjorie? Seems to me I ain't seen you for the longest," he said as he folded his hands over hers. "Been busy?"

But Marjorie did not answer; she only stooped over, and laid her cheek against his in a mute caress. "Dear Daddy Joe!" she thought. "I had forgotten him, alas! but he does not chide me!"

"So you've been happy, Marjorie; so you've been happy. I'm glad!" said he, with tremulous appeal in his tones.

In her heart of hearts Marjorie did not know whether she was happy; if this new strange feeling that possessed her was happiness, then happiness meant a strange unrest—and yet—how was all the familiar commonplace of existence glorified by a new, and as yet nameless interest! It was as if she stood upon the threshold of a new world, and she trembled at the vividness of a joy but half revealed; and yet—strange paradox! distinct enough to cast a shadow on her untried heart.

"I love you! I love you, my Daddy, better and better," she sighed. "I didn't mean to leave you alone, evening after evening. I never will again. I think I am happiest with you. Have you been happy, my Daddy?"

"I miss my fiddle, child," he answered evasively.

"But Cousin says you are to have a new one," Marjorie reminded him.

"I don't want it," he cried, with an impatient movement. "Old friends are best."

Marjorie recoiled slightly. Why was she to be reminded again and again of this exacting claim of *old friends*? Had she begun to care the less for those she had always loved?

"You've found it very nice to have Miss Wallis sing to you. I'm sure she's a new friend," said she, with gentle reproach.

"Yes, yes!" returned Mr. Lancaster, peevishly; "but it makes me sad."

"How? Sad? Are not her songs gay?"

Mr. Lancaster stretched out his hand and drew Marjorie near to him again, and leaned his head against her arm. "Marjorie," he said, with a struggling sigh, "if you had had her chances—you might be—like her."

"Don't you like me best as I am?" Marjorie asked, a little hurt. "Nothing could make me wish *you* different."

"Marjorie! Marjorie!" he cried out, piteously. "You won't leave me? No matter what happens, you won't leave me? It isn't for much longer I shall stand in your way, my little girl!"

Marjorie put her hands on his lips, she clasped his head in her arms, and covered his rugged face with tender kisses.

"Oh, hush! hush! my father!" she whispered, with a sobbing breath.

"No, no; Daddy Joe is the name you first learned to call me; I like that best. I cling to the old, Marjorie; I dread the new."

"I will never leave you, no matter what happens," said Marjorie. "My dearest! my best! Did you feel forsaken because yesterday and the day before and the day before that I let—I let—*other things* detain me? Oh, yes! I have been very wicked, to let the days slip by, and not find an evening rest with you, my dear, dear old Daddy! But see! I am sorry. I love you best of all! I am always happy when I am with you. Isn't my mother near us, when we two are alone together, you and I, dear Daddy? I could almost think I hear her wings."

"I don't know, Marjorie," said Mr. Lancaster, draw-

ing a little away from her. "I ain't clear about them that are dead and gone. Maybe they know, and maybe they don't. Anyway, there ain't no direction to be got from 'em when you're uncertain about your duty, and uneasy in your mind."

With a heavy sigh, he laid his hand caressingly upon her rounded white throat, and for some moments there was silence ; but suddenly he started, and cried out in alarm :

"Marjorie ! Where is the locket ? The little silver locket that was your mother's ? You haven't lost it ?" There was an accent of terror in his voice.

Marjorie put both hands to her throat. "I had it ! I had it this evening," she said. "I know I had it !"

"Such bad luck ! Such bad luck !" lamented Mr. Lancaster, stooping to search the floor of the porch. "To lose a memento of the dead means change and loss of friends."

Marjorie did not assist in the search ; with her hands to her head, she was striving to think what could have become of the locket. She was sure that she had it in the pavilion before Miss Penny called her ; but after that she remembered nothing clearly ; emotions so varied and so conflicting had crowded that little half hour since she left her bouquets all unfinished. She glanced towards the pavilion, where Miss Penny still sat with Harry Kenric. She must wait until supper should call them away. But surely supper was very late !

And then in the darkness behind her, the voice of Cinthy the cook uttered this warning :

"Sho'ly, Miss Marjorie, if you nur Miss Lankster don't nair one come to see 'bout the table, things' ll git as soggy as new ploughed furrows in a spring rain, and that Miss Fish' ll 'spress her 'pinions." By which speech Cinthy's opinion of Miss Fish was made clear.

Marjorie glanced again at the pavilion where Miss Penny still sat immovable. She could not retaliate by calling "Pen—the—sil—ea Lan-cas—ter !" so she meekly obeyed Cynthy's summons and went to see about the table.

It might have been midnight for all Miss Penny knew. She had gone to the pavilion merely to bring

away the bouquets, which were few indeed, and scattered on the floor ; but Harry Kenric was moved by one of those occult impulses for which there is no explanation to relate to her a story, not of love but of adventure, a story that made her pulses beat wildly, and rendered her oblivious of the present. Marjorie's tender heart trembled with the fear that she might say something harsh to the young man who had beguiled the busy moments—or the moments that should have been busy ; but Marjorie need not have feared. Miss Penny could not forget that Harry Kenric was the son of his father, and she had, besides, that native weakness of a nature distinctly maternal, which always finds some excuse for a boy—of any age—while holding a girl strictly to account. She had no harsh words for Harry, but she said, frowning, as, on entering the pavilion her eyes lighted on the scattered flowers :

“Marjorie has grown so heedless. What a careless waste !”

The thrifty farmer's soul of her abhorred waste in any guise.

Harry Kenric was bending his head over something that he held in his two hands, something that glinted in the moonlight, as he hastily slipped it into his pocket with a guilty start ; for he, too, had forgotten the bouquets, and he thought that Miss Penny had come to demand the silver locket, a quaint, old-fashioned trinket with the letter L wrought in turquoise, which had slipped from Marjorie's neck when she ran away and left her flowers. It was not his intention to return it through Miss Penny, and he made haste to convey it out of sight, hoping that it had escaped her notice ; but as Miss Penny saw no reason why a young man who smoked cigars should not carry a silver match-safe in his pocket, the act made no impression upon her. She began gathering up the flowers with impatient haste, and Harry still anxious to divert her attention began eagerly to help her. “They are not wasted !” he said, thinking how lovely Marjorie had looked in their midst. Like Marjorie, he was possessed by a vague sense of something amiss, and he talked on with boyish extravagance, in his desire to propitiate Miss Penny.

“What a glorious night, Miss Lancaster ! On such

nights as these I feel my blood tingle with the desire to do deeds that should live in poetry. If the occasion would only serve, I might do something great, but the occasion never comes."

"It is better to do with our might what our hands find to do," said practical Miss Penny, straightening the stems of the flowers.

"I suppose it is," Harry assented. "Only, when a fellow is young, you see, he has his aspirations. Now my father went through the war, and had adventures that made life worth living."

Miss Penny glanced up quickly: did the young man mean to test her by this exordium? But no; Harry looked serenely unconscious that she had any part in his father's history.

"He tells a thrilling story," continued Harry, "of his being saved from capture by a rebel woman. I beg your pardon, but you know it makes the deed she did seem so much grander, to know that she was a rebel, and hated the Yankees."

"How—how did you hear?" blundered Miss Penny, with quick suspicion of her Uncle Joe.

"Why, from my father, of course," answered Harry, in some surprise, "What is the matter, Miss Lancaster?" he asked, laughing. "I suppose you must look upon her as a traitor, but to me she seems the bravest of the brave."

"Go on," said Miss Penny. It was now her turn to forget the flowers. She sat down upon the bench, and never did mortal listen with so entranced attention to a story the hearer knew better than the reciter.

"And what became of the woman?" she asked, when the story was ended.

"She is dead," was the reply.

With difficulty Miss Penny restrained herself.

"Dead?" she repeated. Now she understood, in a measure the long oblivion to which she had been consigned. "How do you know that she is dead?" she asked, sharply.

"Oh, when the war ended, my father wrote to her, but never received an answer; and then he wrote to some one in the town where she was living at the time of his rescue, and thus he learned that she was dead."

"And her name?" Miss Penny asked, struggling to speak calmly.

"Her name was Rosser, Mrs. Rosser."

In spite of herself, Miss Penny started.

"Why, Miss Lancaster!" exclaimed Harry, eagerly, "Did you ever know any woman of that name?"

"Yes," Miss Penny sighed; but she was an old woman; she could not have taken that midnight ride."

"This was not an old woman. My father says he never knew any braver spirit than hers. Though she is dead, she is not forgotten."

"And is that all you know of her?" Miss Penny asked, with forced calm.

"That is all; but isn't that a great deal? Hers was a deed to immortalize herself."

"And no man can point out her grave to-day!" said Miss Penny, with odd, harsh laughter. In the plenitude of her emotion Miss Penny felt as if she must reveal herself, but wounded pride restrained this impulse. It hurt her to perceive that she had been remembered only as the heroine of a rescue that had been a good bit of adventure worth the telling, while Penny Lancaster, the Georgia tavern-girl, had not been deemed deserving of mention. Was it possible, she wondered, that Morrison Kenric was ashamed of that old friendship? Or was it that he could not forgive himself that he once had asked her to be his wife? And how was it that now his son was under her roof, Morrison Kenric still ignored her? "I will wait and see," she sighed to herself.

Across her thoughts came Harry Kenric's voice, saying: "If I but knew where to find it, I would make a pilgrimage to her grave."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to raise a monument," said Miss Penny, dryly.

"I have thought of that," he answered, turning towards her an earnest face.

Miss Penny laughed.

"You hate her for a traitor!" cried Harry, hotly.

"No matter what I think of her," said Miss Penny, calmly; "I'll tell you the best way to honor her. For her sake, think well of Southern women; for her sake, do not trifle with any woman's heart."

"I don't know what you mean, Miss Lancaster?" Harry stammered.

"I mean that Miss Wallis—" Miss Penny began, but Harry interrupted with a burst of boyish laughter.

"What a joke!" he cried. "*Why, Miss Wallis is going to marry my father.*"

"Your father?" Miss Penny gasped.

"I don't suppose I ought to mention it," said Harry, with sudden gravity; "but you surprised me so." And he laughed again.

"*Your father?*" Miss Penny repeated. "Oh!" She did not know what Harry said further; but she started when she heard the tinkling of the tea-bell; Marjorie, whom she had so harshly chided, was at the post of duty, but where was Miss Penny?

With a great sigh, she rose and went into the house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

O, SUMMER NIGHT!

WHEN all her little household duties were over, Marjorie hurried across the lawn to seek for her locket. On the floor of the pavilion lay the flowers—forgotten; the sight of them gave the girl a little thrill of dismay. What could have happened that Miss Penny should forget anything concerning the business of the farm? For aught that Marjorie could see, not a flower had been touched, and confident that the locket must be hidden among them, she turned over the fragrant heap, hurriedly at first, then more carefully; but the strictest search failed to reveal her treasure, either among the flowers, or anywhere in the pavilion. If it had fallen somewhere on the lawn or among the flower-borders, it would be time lost, she thought, to seek for it until the morrow. But Marjorie did not return at once to the house; little given though she was to folding her hands in idleness, she found it inexpressibly soothing to sit here alone in the stillness of the summer night,

alone with that palpitating, uneasy heart of hers, which she did not yet understand.

All things seemed suddenly new to Marjorie; there were subtle meanings in the winking stars, in the subdued radiance of the moon, in the soft, vague, tentative sounds of the summer night; faint chirpings and flutterings, the susurrus of leaves near by, and the far-off woodland murmurs blended in harmonies never heard before. The fragrance of mignonette and heliotrope filled the garden, and her senses seemed to swoon in the languorous perfume of jasmine and tuberose that came on the wings of the wind, the fitful summer wind, driving the fleecy clouds across the dull blue vault, now veiling, now revealing the flood of silver light that bathed the lawn, and the little beds of riotous bloom.

With a sense of intimate enjoyment never felt before, Marjorie, clasping her hands upon her tumultuous heart, closed her eyes to keep back the rising tears. She did not see Harry Kenric coming across the lawn, she did not know of his approach until he spoke.

"Marjorie!" was all he said; and in an instant, Marjorie sprang up, trembling, but whether for joy or fear, she did not know.

"I have lost my locket;" she faltered. Harry had paused upon the pavilion's step, but now he came in.

"Did you prize it so very much?" he asked.

"Oh, it was my mother's;" sighed Marjorie. "And my father is so troubled at my losing it. I hoped—I thought I might find it here."

"It is not lost, Marjorie," he said, in almost a whisper. I found it—here where you came to look for it. Why may I not keep it?"

"Oh!" cried Marjorie. Relief, surprise, trouble, all mingled in that ejaculation.

"See;" he went on, as he held out his hand with the locket in it. "I have it safe; I won't keep it without your consent; but why may I not?"

"Oh, I can't! I can't!" said Marjorie. I wear it always, it is so precious."

"Marjorie," he whispered, "it is because you hold it so precious, because you always wore it, that I covet it."

She raised her eyes, and before either was aware,

his arms were around her, and their lips had met, in a swift, half-frightened little kiss. Then Marjorie turned her head away, but Harry still clasped her in his arms. "Marjorie!" Marjorie!" he whispered. "I love you! I love you, Marjorie!" Over and over again he said it, as if it were the one supreme truth he knew and comprehended.

Marjorie did not speak, she did not struggle to be released, but she trembled like a leaf.

"Speak to me!" he entreated. "Say you love me!"

And now Marjorie understood what it was that all things had waited for, in the dewy hush of these summer nights. It was not in her nature to do violence to the truth; she lifted her head, she looked at him with her dove-like eyes, and answered, softly;

"Yes! I—love you!"

But as she felt his arms clasp her more closely, she panted, "Oh, my father! Oh, my cousin!" Her heart ached with a sense of treason against those who had loved her longest, loved her first; but Harry in that supreme moment thought only of the girl he held in his arms. Her face was turned from him, and hidden in her hands, while he covered her hair, her neck, her small ears with passionate kisses, and still Marjorie panted, "My father! my cousin!"

"Ah, Marjorie," said he, with love's wisdom, "this moment is sacred to us two; let not the thought of any other come between. Until now, we never lived! Is it not so, dearest?"

But Marjorie had lived so much for others, she did not know how to begin to live for *l'égotisme à deux*. "Your father?" she faltered. Alas how many adverse judgments threatened this new-born joy!

"My father shall be your father!" Harry declared, confidently. "He will be so proud of you, Marjorie!"

"Of me?" sighed Marjorie, with the plaintive incredulity of humility. "Ah, let me go!" she entreated. "You must never speak to me again as you have done to-night—until you hear from your father."

"Oh, Marjorie! Marjorie! Dearer than life!"

"He loves you," said Marjorie, the wise and prudent, "as well as my Daddy loves me—perhaps."

"Of course he does!" laughed Harry. "When I

tell him that I love you as my life, that I will never love anyone else, that I cannot be happy unless you are my wife, he will open his arms, yes : and his *heart* to you, you shall see ! You may as well give me your promise now, Marjorie ? ”

“ No, no, ” panted Marjorie. “ I’m afraid—I’m afraid of your father. And won’t you give me back my locket, please ? It is time for me to go in. ”

But Harry declared his purpose to keep it. “ And wherefore should you go in, this heavenly night ? ” he entreated.

“ Daddy Joe will miss me ! ” said Marjorie, breaking away from him.

She found her Daddy Joe on the broad piazza, sitting apart from the others, and putting her arm over his drooping shoulders, she whispered :

“ The locket is found, my Daddy dear. ”

“ Ah ? ” said Mr. Joe, eagerly. “ Where was it ? ”

“ In the pavilion. ”

“ Safe ? ”

“ Safe, ” sighed Marjorie.

Mr. Lancaster leaned his head caressingly against the strong young figure. “ Listen, ” he whispered ; for Miss Wallis was singing to her guitar some heart-breaking song of love and sorrow, and Mr. Lancaster had just awaked to enjoyment.

But the singing ended at a reasonable hour. Miss Fish and Miss Wallis and Daddy Joe were too wise to encroach upon their night’s rest for any moonlight that ever flooded the earth. But on such a night, and after such a confession in the pavilion, what could a young lover do but sit in the moonlight and dream ? And Marjorie in her little room—she had had a room all to herself for the last two years—Marjorie spent half the night in prayer. She had reached a tremendous crisis in her life ; how was slumber possible to her ?

Neither could Miss Penny sleep. She was not in love like Harry and Marjorie ; the moonlight had no charm to stay her eyelids from slumber, and she was tired with her busy day, and more tired still with the keen emotion through which she had passed, yet Miss Penny closed not her eyes that night. If it had been possible to decide upon a course of action, she could have made

her plans and composed herself to her accustomed, unbroken rest ; but there was nothing to do but wait, and this waiting had in it an element of excitement that banished slumber.

Memory Waits was in love, as deeply as Harry Kenric, and he too had had a moment of keen excitement when he spoke with Marjorie in the big store-room, but Memory Waits kept no vigils. This son of the soil slept his undreaming slumber, the sweet reward of honest toil—slept peacefully, in spite of the temptations of envy, hatred and malice that had visited him that evening, temptations fostered by the very texts he pondered. The moonlight never wooed him to wakeful brooding ; but under the broad sunshine of the morrow, in the open fields, as he went about his work, or rested in the hot noon-tide, Memory experienced all that persistency of wakeful thought prone to haunt the pillow of the sleepless.

A man may be a poet, though he write never a line of verse ; and perhaps the most potent of all poetry is that which finds no expression, but lives vaguely, yet keenly, in emotions that have no name. To Memory Waits was given a passionate, melancholy temperament, developed and fostered by solitary communings with nature. Sometimes he fancied that he heard the great heart of Mother Earth beat in the silent hills ; sometimes the winds and the waters seemed sentient things, speaking to him strange messages of a wisdom denied to other mortals. The trees of the wood, the corn in the fields, all growing things, and the very clods beneath his feet, possessed a life that he could feel and believe in, but could not make others understand. The mysterious dawn with its irresistible summons to all nature, the inevitable sunset vetoing labor, and dismissing man and beast and herb to darkness inexorable, spoke to him unutterable things concerning man's destiny and doom. Memory was, in fact, a pagan and a poet while he thought himself a Christian and a sage. He read his Bible in the woods and in the fields, putting interpretations out of his own experience upon the texts that took possession of his vivid imagination. He held the distinction of exhorter and class-leader in the Methodist meeting-house down the road, where, every

Sunday his voice ascended in fervid and strangely eloquent petitions, for blessings upon the harvest, the springing corn, the wind-shaken fruit-trees, and the ignorant dumb beasts, towards which last he had an exceeding compassion. Very different were the petitions he offered for mankind; sometimes entreating that God's wrath might be averted, but oftenest praying that vengeance might swiftly overtake the sinner. For in Memory's sight, all men and women deserved unsparing condemnation. Yet himself he held as one of the elect who could not sin; and all mankind, he thought, might by prayer and fasting, and a life in communion with nature, become even as he was. He believed that the agrestic life was the life God designed for man; cities he looked upon as the natural result of the sin that came into the world by Eve's transgression.

Miss Penny, following the tradition of the Donalds, was a Presbyterian, and since the erection of a big, white church, built after the Doric pattern—though the native Briarvillians knew not its likeness to a heathen temple—she preferred to worship in the town; but Marjorie and Mr. Lancaster went often to the weather-beaten, barn-like edifice over the hill. It was within easy walking distance, and they liked to please Memory Waits, whose promptness to bring the doctor when Marjorie was ill, they gratefully remembered. In the estimation of the congregation, Mr. Lancaster was a nonentity—alas, poor Gentleman Joe!—but Marjorie commanded the eyes of all the youth, and inspired Memory's most fervid eloquence. The first time he beheld this beauteous vision of girlhood was under the roof of this roadside meeting-house, and from that day he had loved her with the certainty that she was destined in the fullness of time for him, and he, for her. Yet, despite this certainty, he was not free from the jealousy that waits upon love. He consumed his heart in bitterness against Miss Penny that she had admitted this man of the city's life to Marjorie's daily company—a man despised in Memory's eyes for his ignorance of God's wonderful earth, ignorance of all that lore open to Memory Waits in the fields and woods, beside the water-courses, and under the varying sky. It did not hurt Memory's pride to remember that he had learned to

read and write under Marjorie's tuition ; he has burdened by no sense of inferiority in the knowledge that her acquaintance with books far exceeded his ; for all such learning was of man's invention ; the wisdom of the Spirit was the gift of God, and Memory doubted not that this wisdom was his. He did not recognize his feeling toward Harry Kenric as jealousy ; he felt it to be a righteous indignation against the interference of puny man with the divine ordering of Providence. What had Harry Kenric by right, to do with Marjorie, or Marjorie with Harry Kenric ? *They* were not made for each other.

These thoughts were his as he went a-field next day ; and when the noon-tide rest came, he sat down, for a few moments, upon a stump in the fence corner, and took out the little worn Bible he habitually carried. He did not open it at random, as in any ordinary perplexity he would have done, but with predetermined judgment, he read again the verses that had given him comfort the night before, and he read them aloud :

"For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle : thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

"Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies : that I might destroy them that hate me."

Closing the book, he meditated a few moments ; and presently, taking off his hat, he ejaculated, with great fervor, "Amen ! and Amen !"

Then with hands outspread and eyes uplifted, he prayed :

"Even so, O Lord, according to Thy will. Behold, I am but an instrument in thy hands to accomplish thy purpose of aforetime ; and behold, I am *strong* for *Thou hast girded me*. I await Thy time ; O Lord, make no long tarrying."

Miss Fish devoted that morning to letter-writing. In the afternoon she asked for Miss Penny's phaeton, and one of Harry Kenric's horses, and invited Miss Wallis to drive her into town. She wished to post her letter with her own hands, and also she wished to unburden her mind to Miss Wallis.

"Anastasia !" she exclaimed, when they were well on the road, "I am disturbed in my mind about

Harry. Miss Lancaster will certainly marry him to that girl. See how ridiculously she coddles him! Cream and fresh eggs."

"I'm sure we have cream and fresh eggs too," Miss Wallis reminded her.

"Yes; but there's a difference. Something ought to be done."

"About the cream and fresh eggs?" Miss Wallis asked with demure malice.

"Nonsense, Anastasia! Don't be absurd. You know very well that I am referring to that girl. I suggested to Miss Lancaster that it would be a good idea to foster a match between the girl and that young man with the unusual name."

"Oh, surely you *didn't*?" exclaimed Miss Wallis, with amusement and dismay. "What did she say to you?"

"She had the impertinence to tell me not to trouble myself," said Miss Fish, indignantly. "I should have left the house that instant but for Harry."

"And Harry would not have cared in the least," Miss Wallis declared, laughing. "A bold woman is Miss Lancaster, to defy Miss Fish."

"I am not going away to leave the boy to her mercy, never!" Miss Fish announced, with decision. "And as for you, Anastasia, I wonder you don't see that it is your duty to write to Morrison about his son's danger."

"Pardon me, Miss Fish; I told you, long ago, that I should never interfere with Harry, and I must remind you that I do not intend to be a spy upon Mr. Kenric's son."

Miss Fish was growing angry. "Very well, then," she retorted, with a kind of hard emphasis; "I have to inform you that *I* have written. I will trouble you to drive by the post-office, for I wish my letter to go by the next mail."

They had just reached the outskirts of the little town, but Miss Wallis, instead of driving on, checked the horse in the middle of the road, and looked at Miss Fish in silence, a moment; at last:

"You have written Mr. Kenric, *what*, may I ask?"

The question was put with the most insinuating grace, but her voice had a determined ring that made Miss

Fish exceedingly uncomfortable ; nevertheless, she insisted, vehemently :

"I am his friend, an old, old friend of the family ; it is my duty."

"Have you written him to come here?"

"Why not? You surely cannot object to his coming?"

"I do object, most decidedly ; the letter must not go," Miss Wallis declared quietly enough, but the color rose to her forehead.

Miss Fish was so angry that for a moment she could not speak. She did not wish to offend Miss Wallis, for she was anxious to maintain the position she had always claimed, of adviser-general in the Kenric connection ; but she wished also to have her own way. Presently she began to laugh harshly. "Is it possible that you are unwilling to have him meet Miss Lancaster?" she asked, with almost a sneer.

"Precisely," Miss Wallis returned, in cool and even tones. "That is what I object to." But as she spoke, her color deepened.

Miss Fish stared. She had asked the question without dreaming there was any truth in the suggestion. "Ridiculous ! ridiculous !" she exclaimed, rather as if commenting to herself. Then she demanded, sharply : "How long do you mean to wait here in the middle of the road, Anastasia?"

"Until this question is settled," replied Miss Wallis, with imperturbable calm. "I wish you to understand that I will not consent to have your letter go to Mr. Kenric."

"It seems to me," said Miss Fish, haughtily, "that I have a right to conduct my own correspondence according to my own ideas."

"Not when it concerns me," replied Miss Wallis, unmoved. "I cannot, of course, say you shall not send any letter you choose to send ; but if you write for Mr. Kenric to come here, I will write to Judge Wallis to expect me immediately."

Never, perhaps, had Miss Fish been so angry ; but she knew that Anastasia meant what she said, and after a short struggle with herself, she silently held out her hand, with the letter in it.

"Thank you," said Miss Wallis, gravely.

She slipped the letter into her pocket and drove on. They had passed through the town, and had entered the road beyond, before either spoke again. Then Miss Wallis asked, abruptly :

"Have you ever written Mr. Kenric about—this Miss Lancaster?"

"Certainly not. Why should I? That episode is best forgotten. Morrison has buried it in oblivion. You have nothing to fear, you absurd creature."

"Oh, you know nothing whatever about it, Miss Fish!" Miss Wallis exclaimed, impatiently. "Suppose Harry should refresh his father's memory by the mention of her name?"

"Oh, we know what Harry's letters are; a brief statement of the number of pounds he has gained or lost, a rhapsody on his horses, a request for money, perhaps. Possibly he has stated that he is on a farm; *voilà tout*. It is so utterly preposterous that you should be jealous of this Miss Lancaster!"

"Excuse me; I am not in the least jealous of 'this Miss Lancaster'."

"Then suppose Morrison Kenric should come of his own accord?" Miss Fish asked, hopefully.

"If he comes of his own accord," Miss Wallis answered, slowly, "I should—'accept the situation.'" Suddenly, she burst out laughing. "It would be what dramatists call a 'situation,' wouldn't it?" she said.

"Ridiculous!" ejaculated Miss Fish.

"Well, let us wait and see, Miss Fish. Perhaps Harry will be satisfied to leave, after he has attended this camp-meeting he is so curious about. But oh, I wish, *how* I wish none of us had ever come here, had ever heard of this place!" she cried passionately.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

KIMBERLY BRIDGE.

IN the glow of summer-time, when the corn is ripening in the sunshine, and rain, and dew, and the harvest is waiting the will of the Lord, as Memory Waits was wont to say, the work of the farmer is not heavy. At this season of leisure the people of Kimberly and the adjacent region were accustomed to hold their annual camp-meeting. Kimberly is a small settlement among the hills, about twenty miles distant from Briarville. From his early youth Memory Waits had been a regular attendant at this camp-meeting, where he enjoyed no small distinction by reason of his wild and fervid eloquence, his great store of Bible texts, and his reputation for sanctity ; moreover, the ungodly who also assembled there in great numbers to gather news, to talk crops, and also, if possible, to get religion, held Memory in high esteem on account of his natural gift with the divining rod, and his ability in prognosticating the weather. And Memory Waits was human ; he loved the admiration of the profane quite as well, perhaps, as the esteem of the saints. To forego the camp-meeting, and the adulation that there awaited him, was an act of self-denial that he practised, this summer, for the first time, taking a secret comfort in the certainty that he should be missed. But Harry Kenric, from the moment he heard of the camp-meeting, was bent upon going. The rapturous excitement characteristic of such gatherings had an irresistible fascination for him, in his youthful keenness to see all phases of life.

To his surprise, he could find no one disposed to join his expedition. Miss Fish, who had a lofty disdain for "the mob of the redeemed," said "No," with decision and dignity ; Miss Wallis "had been once" ; Gentleman Joe who loved his easy-chair, thought the ride too long ; and Memory Waits had not felt the Call of the

Spirit. Memory was ready, however, to give Harry all needful information about the route.

There were two roads : the nearer way was by Kimberly Bridge, over Cedar Roaring, a narrow, but deep and dangerous stream ; another, and a better road, avoided the creek, but made the journey some miles longer. Memory would give no advice, he left Harry to his own choice ; but when Harry decided to go by the longer route, he went a few miles with him, to put him upon the right course, and gave him a map of his own drawing by which he could find his way back by Kimberly Bridge, if he should decide to return that way.

Harry rose with the lark, and breakfasted with Miss Penny and Marjorie, Memory Waits and the two lads, Memory's cousins, who helped about the farm. It was necessary to make an early start, as he wished to return that night. He drove two horses in a buggy with a top, preferring this mode of travelling to horseback, as it saved him the fatigue of carrying an umbrella.

When he was gone, Marjorie was half-frightened to find what a difference his absence made. Though hardly one little week had passed since that happy hour in the pavilion when he made confession of his love, and though from that hour she had been so shy of him as hardly to allow him an opportunity for another whispered word, he had become so much a part of her life that the house, for her, was empty without him ; and the hours, busy though they were, went slowly by. A feeling of depression, of which she was ashamed, but which she could not conquer, weighed upon her heart.

In the afternoon Dr. Griffith called. It had been some days since the Doctor made a visit to the farm, but he had come early, to make amends, and it was understood that he would stay to tea. The Doctor was a favorite at the farm : Miss Penny and her uncle always received him hospitably ; Marjorie always welcomed him with a kiss ; Miss Fish condescended to be entertained by him, and Miss Wallis declared openly that he was delightful. In this pleasant company more than an hour slipped by before the Doctor bethought himself to ask for Harry Kenric.

"Why, he has gone to Kimberly Camp-meeting," Miss Wallis informed him, gayly. "Nothing of the

kind has he ever seen, and he was off before day, with a two-horse team, in search of a new experience."

"Gone alone?"

"Oh, yes. His man has leave of absence for the present. Although he tried to beat up recruits, I rather think Harry enjoys the freedom of going alone."

"He hasn't gone by Kimberly Bridge, I hope?" asked the Doctor with some anxiety.

"No; I think not. Did he go by Kimberly Bridge, Miss Lancaster?"

"No," said Miss Penny; "he went the lower road."

"What is the matter with Kimberly Bridge?" Marjorie asked, from behind Mr. Lancaster's chair.

"Unsound, rickety," answered the Doctor, turning half way round to look at her. Then he turned back again, saying in his spasmodic way, "Might bear a foot-passenger, or even a horse and rider, But risky. Two horses and a buggy—" And the Doctor shook his head. "Glad he took the lower road."

"Why, so are we," Miss Wallis assented cheerfully.

Marjorie slipped away unnoticed. The sun was behind the hills, but the flush of sunset still lingered in the sky, where one or two stars shone faintly through a rift in the fleece-like clouds. Across the yard and through the vineyard went Marjorie, with hurrying steps to the field where she knew Memory was to be found. She had not gone far when she saw him returning from his work. He wore no coat, and he carried his hoe across his shoulder. The sight of Marjorie coming to seek him sent an exultant thrill through every fibre of his frame. He stopped short, for an instant, and drew a deep breath with the satisfying thought that this was the first result of Harry Kenric's absence: Marjorie had come to meet him!

"Memory," she said, clasping her hands, as if in supplication, "did you know that Kimberly Bridge is unsafe, dangerously unsafe? Dr. Griffith says so." Her voice trembled, and her face was pale, in spite of the rapidity of her walk.

"Yes; I knew it," said Memory calmly.

The color came again to Marjorie's face and she smiled.

"Ah, then," she said with a sigh of infinite relief, "he will not return that way, for you warned him!"

Lying and subterfuge were not among the faults of Memory Waits; if Marjorie should suffer in learning the truth, it was the discipline of the Lord, and he had nothing to do with it; he proceeded therefore to give her the truth with great deliberation. He took the hoe from his shoulder and leaned upon it like a staff; fixing his large, luminous dark eyes, gleaming like stars, upon Marjorie's face, and tuning his voice to that sonorous monotony he was wont to use in the meeting-house, he said:

"Wherefore should I warn him? Behold he is in the hands of the living God; let Him do with His puny creatures as seemeth Him best. *I* left him free to choose."

"Oh, most gracious God!" cried Marjorie, recoiling violently. The blood seemed to freeze in her veins. She was as much horrified at Memory's criminal reticence, as at Harry Kenric's danger. "And if he should choose the bridge! That swift and cruel water! Oh, go! Go at once! Ride for life and death! It may yet be time to save him, and to save your own soul, Memory, from the stain of human blood."

She wrung her hands with wild entreaty, but Memory remained unmoved.

"Ye ain't experienced religion, Marjorie," he said, coldly; "ye don't know nothin' 'bout the will o' the Lord. Behold, this son of perdition went forth to scoff and to jest at the people of God, and what punishment shall be meted out to him? A swift judgment shall overtake him. If he chooses the bridge, it is the Lord's will; and the Lord's will be done."

In an instant, Marjorie was transformed by his words; the dove-like gentleness that clothed her looks, her speech, her actions, forsook her all at once. She flew at him fiercely, she grasped him by the collar of the blue homespun shirt he wore, and shook him with all her strength. "Fiend!" she cried, hoarsely. "*Will* you save him?"

"The Lord's will be done!" repeated Memory, coldly, though a rage of jealousy consumed him.

Marjorie dropped her hands. "You are no better

than a murderer," she said: but as she turned to leave him, "Oh, Memory; she sobbed out bitterly, "*I trusted you fully.*"

Memory did not stir hand or foot; he remained leaning on his hoe, staring after the girl, who ran, with a fawn-like fleetness, down the long path beside the furrows, and disappeared among the corn. She had taken the shortest way to the stable, and presently he saw her come forth mounted on Harry Kenric's own saddle-horse, and ride off, at a gallop, along the path that led to the pasture.

"Marjorie!" he shouted to her. "Marjorie!"

But she did not heed. The gate that led to the pasture was open, and she dashed through, and soon was lost in the shadows of the wood.

Memory stood paralyzed. He comprehended, at once, what she would do. Kimberly Bridge was five miles away, but Marjorie had taken a more direct route through the woods. And all at once, the meaning of the words she had spoken pierced its way to his beclouded brain: *Had he then mistaken the word of the Lord?* was the maddening question that repeated itself continually to his surging thoughts, and her parting words rang in his ears with bitter mockery. He dropped his hoe and dashed his hands against his face. "God has forsaken me," he cried aloud, "if she rides on to death!"

The next instant he was running along the same path that Marjorie had taken, making the straightest way to the stable.

With hands shaking like leaves in the blast, he thrust a bridle upon the head of Miss Penny's sturdy cart horse, and mounted without a saddle.

"I'm off for Kimberly Bridge!" he shouted to the two plough-boys, as he passed them returning from work.

They did not know in the least what it meant; but as he rode at full speed, they fancied he might have received a sudden call of the Spirit to attend camp-meeting, and they mentioned their surmise to Cinthy in the kitchen.

Cinthy, in the full belief that their surmise was correct, told Miss Penny; but Miss Penny did not accept

any such explanation of Memory's furious riding ; she understood, without words, that there was danger, and she acted with her accustomed promptitude. She took Dr. Griffith quietly aside, and told him of Memory's sudden departure, gave him a cup of coffee, and besought him to ride without delay to Kimberly Bridge. Then with a provident instinct, she made the two plough-boys harness the mules to the wagon and bade them follow the Doctor, taking with them a mattress and blankets, and brandy and ropes, and hatchets and saws : and having done what she could, she sat down in silence to bear her anxiety alone. Not until then did she miss Marjorie, and missing her, she understood at once that it was Dr. Griffith's statement that had given the alarm.

Meantime, Marjorie, urging her horse to his utmost speed, was far upon the way to Kimberly Bridge. She had saved half the distance by following this trail through the dim wood which she hardly knew, but in which she seemed to be guided by love's divine inspiration.

The moon was just rising when she came out upon the road, and the sky was covered with a fleece of clouds that dimmed the starlight, yet Marjorie's straining vision descried the crude arch still spanning the chasm above the turbulent waters that babbled cruelly of danger and death to her shuddering sense. In the depths of the wood, the screech-owl and the whip-poor-will clamored at intervals against the silence, and once a fox barked in the vague distance. Never before had Marjorie been in so lonely a spot ; yet who that is fired by a great purpose ever felt alone ?

The first sight of the bridge assured her that either Harry Kenric had passed over in safety, or that he still was riding to his death—unless he had taken the other road to return.

She checked her horse and bent her head to listen : from beyond the bridge came distinctly the sound of wheels against the gravel, and behind her, farther away she heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs beating the ground in desperate haste, and she knew that Memory Waits had followed her.

No creature of the forest, crossing her path from out

the shadows could have inspired her with the terror that Memory's approach awakened in her heart. The trust she had reposed in him was dead, and in its place a dread unspeakable energized all her efforts. In the belief that Harry Kenric's safety depended upon herself alone, she sprang from her horse and rushed upon the bridge. A buggy drawn by two horses and carrying a single passenger had just entered upon the other end : there needed no words to tell Marjorie who the passenger was.

Already she could hear the timbers cracking, could feel the high-swung fabric swaying with the impulse her own light weight had given it.

"Back!" she shouted shrilly, with uplifted arms. "Back in Heaven's name, or you are lost! The bridge is unsafe!"

At the sudden apparition of this figure all in white, the horses reared and plunged, and Harry Kenric, with the instinct of self-preservation, dropped the reins and jumped from the buggy. In that same instant Marjorie felt herself caught in a powerful grasp and swung back into the road.

Memory Waits had thrown her from the bridge just in time. There followed instantly a terrific crash, that to Marjorie's tortured senses seemed to last for ages, a frantic scream from the horses as they plunged down to death, a murderous turmoil of the waters—sounds that the echoes gave back with lingering mockery—and then silence, awful silence, save for the remorseless babble of the stream.

Marjorie had put her hands over her ears to shut out the maddening sounds, and for an instant her senses reeled; but when that dreadful silence came, she started up, crying wildly :

"Harry! Harry! Answer me!"

She believed him whelmed in the waters and gone from her forever, yet it seemed to her that his fleeting spirit must linger to give her back some response. Of Memory at that moment she did not think at all; but the only answer that came back to her cry was a tremulous moan—just at her feet it sounded—and she knew that it came from Memory Waits.

A shuddering horror seized her as she heard, a fierce,

vindictive hatred of this poor fellow took possession of her, making her almost glad of his suffering, even though she loathed herself for such a sentiment.

Stunned and bewildered, she fell upon her knees, the only expression possible of a prayer that could find no words, hardly, even, coherent thought. Presently she heard again Memory's piteous moan, and staggered once more to her feet, shuddering still, but impelled by a wild, unreasoning desire to look down into the remorseless waters—her lover's grave.

The moon had struggled free of the clouds just then, and as the girl stood upon the giddy brink, holding by some bushes rooted there, she beheld, in the pale, weird light flooding the opposite bank, a sight that made her heart leap to her lips. It was the body of a man lying motionless beside the water's edge, upon the little strip of level ground at the foot of the bluff. Until then, Marjorie unconsciously had hoped in Harry Kenric's escape. A cry of despair burst from her lips. "Dead! Dead!" she wailed, and wrung her hands: but only the echoes answered.

And then she thought of Memory—of Memory who perhaps had repented, and had wished to save. Creeping along the bank of the stream, she threw herself upon the ground, and leaned far over the edge where she could peer under the broken timbers, and there she beheld Memory Waits suspended in mid-air among the beams that still held in place, but yet might fall at any moment.

She did not think of calling for aid; she was hardly conscious where she was; she seemed to live only in the agonizing certainty that Harry Kenric was dead, and that Memory Waits had consented to his death.

"Memory! Memory!" she cried, bitterly. "He is dead! dead! He will never speak again! He does not answer when I call. Why did you not let me go down with him?"

Memory answered by a heart-rending groan, that awoke a divine compassion in Marjorie's breast. "God help me to forgive you!" she faltered; and then, for the first time, she thought of calling aloud for help. But when her shrill, sharp cry smote the stillness, only echo answered, while the restless waters seemed to mock at

her despair. Again she repeated her frantic call, rising to her feet for a more vigorous utterance ; for all at once had come the hope that Harry Kenric might be only stunned by his fall.

This time there came an answering shout from a pair of stentorian lungs on the other side of the stream ; and presently appeared, on the opposite bank, a tall, powerfully built man, accompanied by a slip of a lad.

“My God!” exclaimed the man. “Ef Kimberly Bridge ain’t busted! An’ thar’s a woman over thar! Unless it’s a sperrit.”

At this the lad took to his heels, and the man burst out laughing.

“Oh, stay and help!” pleaded Marjorie, shrilly, as she beat the air with her hands. “Mr. Kenric has fallen over the bluff, don’t you see? Perhaps he isn’t killed! Try, *try* to do something for him!”

“My Lawd! Ef it ain’t Marjorie Lancaster!” the man ejaculated. But it was no time for explanations. Running swiftly along the edge of the bluff to a spot where the slope was less abrupt, he scrambled down, as fast as rocks and bushes would allow, and in a few seconds was stooping over Harry Kenric.

“He ain’t dead!” he shouted, presently. “He’s a-comin’ to!”

Marjorie burst into tears.

The man, as he turned and looked up to shout to her, had caught sight of a dark body under the broken timbers. “Hello!” he cried. “That another one up there, under the bridge?”

“Yes,” answered Marjorie, who could hardly speak for sobbing. “Memory Waits.”

“Mem’ry Waits? A devil of a fix!” ejaculated the man ; and forthwith, to Marjorie’s dismay, he began to scramble up the bank by the way he had got down.

Marjorie, in despair at this desertion, shouted again for help, and once again there came an answering shout, this time from Dr. Griffith, who, in a few moments more, rode up, his horse flecked with foam.

The Doctor sprang to the ground, and rushed to where Marjorie was standing on the bank. Excitement made his brusque. “Talk quick!” he cried, seizing

her by the arm, almost roughly. "What's happened? The bridge? Who's hurt?"

"Both," said Marjorie, wringing her hands.

"Don't be a fool! Both who? Both what?"

"Harry Kenric over there, and Memory here, under the bridge. Oh, is there no way, *no* way to get to him?"

Marjorie was thinking of Harry Kenric; but with the Doctor, it was "first come, first served." He threw himself upon the ground, just as Marjorie had done, and peered over at the wreck of the bridge. "Um!" he said, jumping up and dusting his knees with his big riding-gloves. "Bad case. Confound those fellows! Why don't they hurry up? *One* man can't extricate him."

Once more he threw himself on the ground, and peered under the broken timbers, to say to Memory, "Take heart, my poor fellow; Miss Penny is sending the boys; we'll soon have you out of there. But I'll be hanged if I see how it's to be done," he grumbled to himself, as he rose again. Then he lifted up his voice in a shout that made the woods ring.

He was answered by a shout close at hand, that did not come from Miss Penny's plough-boys, and crashing through the bushes across the road appeared the stalwart farmer who had scrambled down the bank to Harry Kenric.

Marjorie uttered a little cry of astonishment.

"Hello!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Eben Johnson, by all that's lucky. Don't you live on t'other side? How the devil did you get across?"

"Foot-log," answered Johnson, with laconic brevity.

"Foot-log?" repeated the Doctor, staring. It was incredible that a foot-log should span this stream.

"Foot-log, I said, sir," Johnson assured him, grinning, "Don't believe me, go see for yo'self. 'Bout fifty yards above, whar them rocks they call the Big Brothers splits the waters. Thar's a rotten plank or two acrost in the lesser rocks on this side, an' a log from the big rock in the middle to the bluff on t'other. Like a rope in the a'r but I'm usened to it. T'other man over thar stunned," he informed the doctor, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the spot where

Harry Kenric lay. "But I reckon he'll come round. Bad fix, eh, Doc?"

The doctor shook his head gloomily.

"Well, to be shore," proceeded Johnson, garrulously, "me'n my half-sister's boy, Luke, was out attar a mink, an thar come a yell like all Gabriel abroad; fair made my ha'r rise, sir; an' then thar was a lesser screech, only a gal could a give; an' with that me'n Luke come a-tiltin; but Luke, when he glimpsed the gal in the moonlight, clipped it for home. Haw, Haw! Took her for a sperrit! Haw, Haw! How you reckon it happened, Doc?" he asked, with sudden sobriety.

"How the devil should I know?" returned the Doctor, with angry impatience. "Can't you do anything but talk? Here's Memory Waits caught under these timbers—and the question is, How to get him out alive."

Johnson, in his turn, got down upon the ground, and peered over. "It *mought* be did," he announced, presently, supporting himself on his elbow to look up at the Doctor, then leaning farther over, to get a better view. "I say! Mem'ry," he called out, "Can't ye help yo'sell none? Try to sorter git a purchase and hyst yo'self a bit."

"I'm—all—jammed in," panted Memory, faintly.

"Well, to be shore, we'd need a rope, and hatchets, and saws," said Johnson, taking another look.

"Hatches and saws," repeated Memory, with a groan. "'By terrible things—in righteousness—shalt thou answer us, O Lord. In righteousness.'"

"He ain't so fur gone," remarked Johnson, hopefully, as he rose up; "he kin quote Scripture. I mought take yo' horse, Doc, an' gallop over to Maxwell's, that's the nearest place."

"No," interrupted the Doctor, "they're coming with ropes and hatchets, and everything needful. Penny Lancaster thought of it all. Wonderful woman."

"Good land!" ejaculated Johnson. "She ain't heard that yell, plum' three miles away, as the crow flies?"

"No time for explanations, sir," said the Doctor, curtly. "Here is the wagon, at last, thank God! We must to work."

Then the Doctor fell to berating the two plough-boys, who were dragging everything from the wagon, in a

panic of haste. "So confounded slow when lives are at stake! Mind what you are about! Where are you going? What you going to do?" he cried, sharply.

The two lads didn't in the least know what to do; they stood still and stared helplessly.

"Fools!" said the Doctor.

Johnson gave a short laugh. "Reckin you air mo' use in a case o' broken bones, Doc, than broken bridges," he said, sententiously, as he pulled off his jacket. "'Thout boastin', Eben Johnson's the best man for this business, an' I'll take the risk for Mem'ry, seein' it was by his preachin' I was converted. Gimme the rope 'bout my middle, boys, and make hit fast to thisher tree; an' don't nobody pester me with directions, but jest all hands obey my orders."

It so happened that this end of the bridge was still sufficiently secure to afford a precarious foothold. By using great caution, Johnson was enabled to saw and cut away the broken timbers among which Memory Waits was so cruelly jammed; but the hardest work of this most difficult and dangerous undertaking was drawing the poor fellow up to *terra firma*. For Memory could not help himself at all, and it was impossible to move him from his perilous position without causing him exquisite suffering, so that he called out in agony to let him go down to death; and when at last they had him safely deposited in the wagon, he swooned away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FORGIVE AND FORGET.

"WELL! That job's done, thank the Lord!" ejaculated Johnson. "Now for t'other one."

The Doctor started violently. In his excitement about Memory Waits he had utterly forgotten Harry Kenric.

"And Marjorie—Where is Marjorie?" he demanded, looking around in alarm.

Johnson turned about, frightened likewise; but presently he cried out, throwing up his arms:

"By the Lord! Look yonder, Doc! Ef she ain't crossed that crazy foot-log an' got to him, wish I may die! Thar's grit, boys!" And he sent up a cheer in which the two plough-boys and the Doctor joined lustily.

It was, indeed, true. The moment Marjorie heard the foot-log described, she had darted away, obeying a swift and prescient impulse that led her unerringly, through tangled brush and brier, tearing her face and hands, until she came to that precarious passage over rocks and bubbling water. In cooler moments her head must have reeled but to stand upon that narrow pathway, high in air; but now she was conscious only that she was going to him she loved, and the safety that waits upon somnambulism attended her footsteps. It seemed to her an eternity before she found the little path along the bluff leading to the point where she had seen Johnson descend, and yet it had taken her less time than the cool-headed Johnson required to make the same trip. Undismayed, she climbed down the declivity, and she had reached the spot where Harry lay half-unconscious, just as the wagon arrived on the other side.

With faint, breathless cries of grief, of joy, of hope and dread, she bent over him, and felt his heart which was feebly beating, yet—did her hopes deceive her?—it beat stronger at every pulse. She bowed her face to his and discerned that he still breathed, and then she gently

lifted his head to her knees and sat there supporting him, trembling, weeping, knowing only that she was with him at last, and utterly incapable of thinking of anything further to be done. And after a little while, Harry opened his eyes and recognized her.

"Marjorie?" he whispered, feebly, but with an accent of delight. "Is it all over?" he murmured. "And are we in Heaven?"

He lifted his hand to caress her cheek as she bent above him, and then lost consciousness again. Marjorie was so near the edge of the stream that she could reach her hand into the water and bathe his face, and this she was doing with patient hope, when they cheered her from the opposite bank.

"And what's to be done now?" queried the Doctor, with despairing appeal to the stalwart Johnson, whose success in rescuing Memory Waits had won his unquestioning reliance.

"Why, ye'd better cross over and feel of him," Johnson counselled with composure. "I ain't no gift in doctorin'."

"My head 'll spin like a top," the Doctor demurred.

"You kin do as much as a gal, I reckon? Come, I'll lead ye. You've only to gimme yo' hand, and one foot up and t'other down, ye know."

The Doctor felt cold chills creep over him, but he was ashamed to refuse. "Drive on there with that wagon," he commanded. "Get Memory home as quick as you can. I'll be along in the course of time. One of you take my horse and gallop ahead to give Miss Lancaster warning what's happened."

The horses upon which Memory and Marjorie had ridden, had rushed away at the crashing of the bridge, in a mad panic, and were now whinnying at their pasture-gates.

"What's that for?" asked Johnson. "How air ye to git back?"

"By the lower road, please Heaven," answered the Doctor "If I have to foot it every step. It isn't so many year since I marched with the boys in gray. It'll double every white hair in my head, crossing that log. I sha'n't take that risk twice."

Johnson gave a hitch to his pantaloons and grinned.

"Ye air true grit, Doc, by yo' own showin'. 'Countin' of the white hairs, ye must of crossed a many a high-hung, resky path."

"Prematurely gray, sir," said the Doctor. "Will you lead on?"

Piloted by Johnson, Dr. Griffith accomplished the passage of the foot-log in safety, and made his breathless way down the bluff. "I've visited many a patient in out-of-the way places, in the course of my practice," he grumbled; "but this beats any experience ever I went through."

However, he had the satisfaction of finding Harry Kenric not so badly hurt as he had feared. Harry was fully conscious now, and able to give some account of his fall. He had jumped from the buggy not on the ground, but on the bridge, and clung to the upright post that supported the railing; but this had given way, just after the horses went down, precipitating him over the bluff that sloped backward from the stream, so that he had partly rolled partly fallen to the bottom. His left arm was broken, and his left ankle badly sprained, and he was severely bruised, but he did not seem to have sustained any other injury. Still he was helpless, and what to do with him, was a puzzling question.

"It will take five or six men to heft him up the bank," said Johnson, with his head on one side, considering the problem.

"We'll never git him up this bank at all, until we build a stair," declared the Doctor, gloomily.

"Not *here*; no, *sir*," Johnson admitted. "But thar's pretty good foot-hold along the water's aidge all the way on this side, an' about a half mile further down thar's a tollable easy slope. It's a rough passage, but put him on a litter, and five or six men could worry along. It'll be broad day, how'ver, befo' the job's done."

"How to get the men?" queried the Doctor.

"Ah, I'll trump up the neighbors," responded Johnson, cheerily.

"I ought to be going back," said the Doctor, uneasily. "I'm afraid Memory Waits will die. I wish now I hadn't sent my horse off."

"If you can do Memory any good, Doctor, pray lose no time in going to him," pleaded Harry.

"Aye," said Johnson, eagerly. "I'll look after this un, you may depend. I kin git you a muel to my place, ef you kin walk that fur? "'Bout a quarter mile."

"Marjorie," said the Doctor, "are you afraid to stay here with Harry?"

"No; I am not afraid," answered Marjorie, simply.

"She's got the grit o' Miss Lancaster herself," Johnson declared, in admiration. "Don't ye be oneasy, little gal," he added; "we'll have ye away from here, safe an' sound, by streak o' dawn. I don't reckon nothin' is goin' to trouble ye, but if ye like, here's my pistol."

Marjorie protested that she was not afraid, but she took the pistol because Dr. Griffith urged it, and then the Doctor and Johnson went away, and she was alone with Harry under the stars.

"Marjorie, dear, it is so very strange," said Harry. "Tell me how you happened to be here; tell me all."

But to tell him *all* was impossible; she told him only what he needed to know. Harry was safe, and she had forgiven Memory, pitying him with an infinite pity, when she remembered his suffering; and yet she winced when Harry said:

"Poor Memory! Dear Memory! He would have saved me if he could."

She hoped that this was true; but knowing what she did, could she be sure? She shivered in doubt.

"Are you cold, Marjorie?" asked Harry.

"No, no," she faltered.

"Dear Memory! The danger is all over now, why do you tremble so, my dearest? He saved you, my darling! Saved you for me, and a lifetime would not suffice for my gratitude. And to think that it was you, *you*, my slim little love, who saved me! My brave one!—Marjorie, since you are not hurt, I would rather you had saved me than that Memory had saved me—if only he had escaped. How my father will bless you! How proud he will be to call you his daughter!"

Marjorie sighed.

"Marjorie, I hope Memory will not die,"

“ Oh, I hope so ! I hope so ! ” panted Marjorie, shuddering. “ It would be dreadful, *dreadful*, if he were to die, ”

“ Marjorie, let us pray for him ; let us ask God to spare his life. I am so bruised I can not kneel, but you kneel, dear angel, kneel and pray ; God will hear you. ”

Marjorie, with sweet obedience, knelt upon the sand ; but the sound of the waters filled her ears, those cruel waters, that but for a chance word from Dr. Griffith, might now be babbling above Harry Kenric’s head ; and she burst into passionate weeping.

“ Marjorie dearest ! Marjorie beloved ! ” cried Harry, in deep distress. “ He will not die ! God will not send us that sorrow. ”

“ God be merciful unto us—and bless us, ” sobbed Marjorie, brokenly. “ And forgive us—forgive us our trespasses—as we forgive—— ”

She could say no more, but when she rose from her knees, neither she nor Harry was aware that she had not prayed—in words—for Memory’s life to be spared.

They sat silent after this, holding each other’s hands, and waiting in deep content for the help that was presently coming. They did not need to utter the one absorbing thought that possessed them both, for each unsorbing thought that possessed them both, that nothing now could sever them.

In order to spare her guests a prolonged anxiety, Miss Penny did not tell Miss Fish or Miss Wallis of the danger that threatened Harry Kenric, until she saw the messenger riding down the hill on Dr. Griffith’s horse.

Miss Wallis received the information calmly, though the bright color forsook her cheeks. “ We must hope for the best, ” she said, gently, “ until we know the worst. ” But she thought of the boy’s father, and her voice died away to a whisper.

Miss Fish behaved with unreasonable violence. She upbraided Miss Penny, she accused Miss Wallis of want of feeling, she abused Dr. Griffith ; she called every one to witness that she had never approved of Harry’s taking up his abode on the farm. When the messenger rode into the yard and told the story of the

disaster, Miss Fish became still more enraged. "And THAT GIRL is there!" she cried, "Monstrous! I well believe it was all arranged on purpose!"

Miss Penny's patience gave away. "Miss Fish," she said, severely, "I will not allow you to reflect upon Marjorie in that way. In all probability it is due to her that Harry Kenric escaped with his life." And then Miss Penny went off to see what could be done for Memory.

"Do you hear that, Anastasia? Do you hear?" cried Miss Fish. "If she should have saved his life, what a misfortune!"

Miss Wallis burst into hysterical laughter.

"You unfeeling girl!" said Miss Fish. "His father must be telegraphed for; Yes! *instantly*. I *will* have my way this time."

"Certainly," Miss Wallis assented, checking her laughter. "His father must be sent for—must come." She rose as she said this, stood a moment, irresolute, stretched out her hands gropingly, and for the first time in her life, fainted.

"The most inconsiderate thing she could have done," said Miss Fish, helplessly. "But Anastasia always was *so* absurd."

About midnight Dr. Griffith returned, having ridden a long way round on Johnson's "muel". He reported favorably concerning Harry Kenric, but approved of sending for his father. "The boy is pretty badly shaken up," he said; "and it may be some weeks before he will be able to get about. More satisfactory to have his father at hand."

"And Memory?" inquired Miss Penny, anxiously. "What of Memory?"

The Doctor shook his head sadly. "Only a question of time. Internal injuries, poor fellow."

It was nine o'clock, next morning, before Harry Kenric was brought back to Miss Penny's house. Johnson drove him in a little cart, lying on a shuck mattress, the best Mrs. Johnson had to offer, but the journey over a rough road in that jolting vehicle was not an easy one for a man in his condition; and Miss Fish, when she beheld him, pale and bruised, his arm in a sling,

broke out into fresh abuse of Miss Penny's entire household.

By this time, however, Miss Penny's household had learned to disregard her vituperation. "Where is Marjorie?" Miss Penny asked, calmly putting Miss Fish aside.

"She is to my house, Miss Lankster," replied Johnson. "With my wife. Thar warn't no room in the cyart, an' thar warn't nothin' for her to ride, 'ceptin' of a steer, as Dr. Griffith he had the muel, an' we warn't agreein' to see her walk, bein' she's all of a trimble, any ways ; so my wife she kep' her."

"I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Johnson," said Miss Penny, with feeling. "You've been a friend in need. But I must have my child at home. I'll go myself and bring her, while the Doctor is here to look after our wounded."

"Ye talk like a gin'ral of the army, Miss Lankster," said Johnson, with enthusiasm ; "an' ye deserve to be."

"Yes, bring Marjorie home, Miss Lancaster," said Harry ; "bring her with trumpets blowing, and banners flying. She saved my life."

"It needed but this," muttered Miss Fish. "When it is manifest that it was Memory Waits who saved him. Such is the gratitude of man !"

Miss Penny ordered her phaeton and drove to Mrs. Johnson's—a long drive it was—where she found Marjorie pale and tearful.

"Do not be angry with me, Cousin," she pleaded. "He would have been lost, if I had not gone."

"Angry with you, my dear child !" said Miss Penny, with almost a sob. "Oh, Marjorie, I'm proud of you. You've done a brave deed ; God grant you may not be forgotten therefor." And she held the girl in her arms a long time, aching with the thought that the day was at hand when she must give her up.

So Miss Penny brought Marjorie home, and then set herself to do her best for the sufferers under her roof.

Memory Waits lingered yet a few days to expiate his sin in a mental anguish far greater than his physical suffering. Harry Kenric, in the plenitude of his sympathy, would fain have been carried to the poor fellow's bedside, to thank him, to bless, to utter assurances of

undying gratitude and friendship ; to promise him every comfort, every gratification in the power of man to give ; but to Harry's grief and humiliation, Memory's constant, almost frantic prayer was, to be delivered from "*that man of the city*." Those who attended upon him, thought him delirious. Marjorie alone knew the secret of his anguish, and Marjorie alone shrank from him with an unspeakable dread. Three days passed before she saw him, and then she went to him with trembling and a nameless apprehension, for Memory had sent her word that he had to tell her of a great trouble that weighed upon him and would not let him rest.

"I think the poor fellow is out of his head, Marjorie," the Doctor said ; "you need not mind what he tells you."

And she was left alone with Memory Waits.

She sat down beside the bed where he lay, propped up on pillows, the ghost of his former self. His large, dark eyes, sunken in his blanched face, shone with a preternatural brightness. He did not smile at her—there was that in his look which seemed to say that Memory Waits would smile never again—but he looked at her with piteous beseeching, and then put up his left hand to shade his eyes.

"Marjorie," he sighed, "my right hand has lost its cunning forever. 'By terrible things in righteousness shalt thou answer us, O God.' His judgments they air just, and I submit. Ye wouldn' niver clasp hands with me again, and so it's no matter. I got a word to say, Marjorie, I don't want nobody to know. I got my confession to make, what there ain't no peace for me ontel I get yo' forgiveness."

"I do, I do indeed forgive you, Memory," said Marjorie. "He is safe, you know."

Memory drew his breath sobbingly. "Ye don't onderstand !" he cried. "Ye called me no better than a murderer, Marjorie, but ye didn' know how sharp that word come home to me. It was the temptation of the Devil, and God has took away the use of the member that sinned, and so I know God forgives me—it is a sign. A dead thing forever is my right hand that sought to do the Devil's work, and behold, I go maimed the rest of my days. God's will be done."

He paused, panting for breath.

"Try to sleep, now, Memory," said Marjorie, softly; "and I will sing to you some of the hymns you love."

"No, no," he said, excitedly. "I got to tell ye. I knew 'bout the bridge. I knew 't warn't safe. But I *prayed* for him, Marjorie, I *wrastled* in prayer, for I knew life and death be the mysteries of the Lord. I said 'Lord, all creatures air in Thy hand; if thou dost take care that not a sparrer shall fall to the ground, behold, now, Thou, Lord, hast this puny creature of Thine in Thine own keeping to direct his steps aright, if this be Thy will. If he be led by the way of the bridge and perishes—why, he perishes. God's will be done. But if it be thy purpose to save him, he shall not return by the way of danger.' That's what I prayed, Marjorie. It war the reasonable prayer of faith."

Memory poured out his words, feeble though he was, with such eagerness that it was impossible to check him; only when he paused for breath, could Marjorie attempt to soothe him.

"Let us forget the bridge, Memory," she said, gently. "It is all over now, and God is good; He has saved, and He will forgive."

"I know; I know," panted Memory. "God forgives because He is good and His mercy endureth forever. It is *your* forgiveness I want, Marjorie, and ye air mortal—and the mercy of mortals is oncertain—as the wind that bloweth where it listeth. Ye don't know as ye forgive, onlest ye got a clear onderstandin'. I ain't done tellin' ye. For when I had prayed, there seemed to come a light out o' darkness, and I said God will take care of his safety; but if destruction be God's will, I, even I, will make destruction the surer."

Again he paused to gather strength, and Marjorie, half-doubting that she heard aright, stared at him, with a creeping horror.

"While I went forth with the scoffer who would be seeking pleasure in deriding God's saints," he presently continued, "I took with me the means to accomplish God's purposes—so I thought, so I thought. I warn't no murderer, Marjorie; I could ha' killed him on the roadside and hid him in the wood, but I knew his life was in God's hands. But I was free to resk my own life to work out

God's will. I came a long way round by Kimberly Bridge, and I made sure it should not stand under the feet of any scoffer ; and I knew, too, that quick destruction would be a mercy. I loosened the timbers ; at the risk of my own life I loosened them, and the bridge rocked under me when I came back."

Marjorie sat like one turned to stone ; the blood seemed to freeze in her veins ; for she knew that Memory was not out of his head, and she believed every word he said.

"For God's sake don't look at me like that, Marjorie," he implored, putting his trembling left hand over his eyes. "I tell you I believed I was doing God's work. For if the bridge had fallen then, I'd a knowed God did not purpose to destroy. But I waited and I waited, and the bridge was still. And so I came away and said 'God's will be done.' And behold it was the Devil's job that was put upon me ; it was the Devil's job, and I never knew it, ontel you come to me out yonder in the field, and said you'd never trust me no mo.' Leastwise, that was what you meant. And I saw you was one of God's angels sent to warn me, though you ain't experienced religion. It was God guided you—"

"It *was* God guided me," repeated Marjorie, in a hushed voice. "Merciful Heaven !"

"And don't you go to believe I rode after you to save Harry Kenric's life, Marjorie," pursued Memory, bitterly, "I ain't one to lie, not for glory. I warn't minded about Harry Kenric—I had left him to the Lord, but if you had gone down, then I knowed I was damned forever, here and hereafter. *You* saved his life, but I saved yourn, and that's how I can ask ye to forgive. Marjorie ! Marjorie ! What I suffer in the body is nothin' to the torment of soul—Forgive !"

But Marjorie was silent. "Suppose," thought she, "suppose it had ended as Memory had wished !" And she shuddered.

"Without your forgiveness I must die," moaned Memory, piteously. "And I am afraid to die with that look of your face always to remember, Marjorie ! Marjorie !"

But still Marjorie was unmoved. She thought she

had forgiven him, but that was before she knew all.

"Ah," he said, with a bitter groan, as he stretched forth his left hand, opening and shutting his fingers in the beam of light that struggled through the imperfectly closed shutters, "all things air yourn still ; life, hope, love, and this world o' growing things—Ah, Marjorie, you saved him, *but it was God's will*, and all along I *prayed* God's will be done."

"Oh, Memory !" cried Marjorie, as she threw herself upon her knees beside him. "Forgive *me* ! You were tempted, and you suffer. I forgive, and I will try to forget."

Memory closed his eyes, and was silent, while there flickered but an instant upon his pinched features what might pass for the ghost of a smile, "*I shan't—forget*," he said, presently, with a long quivering sigh. "You see I love you, Marjorie. And I ain't—goin' to die. It's the will o' the Lord. I'm to live henceforth—a marked man. To carry—the word o' the Lord's judgment. This right hand o' mine can never wrong man nor beast, nor herb no mo' ; its power for evil is clean gone forever ; but it'll be a power for the work o' the sperrit in the conversion of sinners. Won't you clasp it again, Marjorie?"

Alas, for the imperfection of human forgiveness ! Marjorie made a strong effort to control a shudder, before she could compel herself to touch that hand which had doomed the life dearer than her own to sudden destruction. And yet how easily by a lie might Memory have carried out his design. She slipped her hand, throbbing with youth's warm pulses, upon the cold and helpless fingers, and as she touched them, the tears sprang to her eyes and rolled over her cheeks.

"Don't be afeard," said Memory. "Them fingers is allerways cold, now. It's God's everlastin' judgment on the member what has sinned. It's his will I'm to live—a marked man—for God's glory."

He closed his eyes ; his head drooped upon the pillow ; he sighed softly, and Marjorie crept on tip-toe from the room.

"He is asleep," she said.

But Memory Waits was dead.

Marjorie did not go to the funeral ; she was too ill to

leave her room ; but Miss Fish and Miss Wallis went with Miss Penny and Gentleman Joe to join the immense concourse that assembled from far and near to follow Memory Waits to his last resting-place. Harry Kenric, too, though unable yet to walk, insisted upon being lifted into the little phaeton with Miss Penny ; and he won the hearts of the primitive hill-folk by weeping like a child through the long sermon, that set forth, with a rude, yet graphic eloquence, the dead man's excellences and his deed of heroism ; while Marjorie, alone in her room, prayed Heaven hopelessly, for power to forget the dread revelations of Memory's death-bed.

CHAPTER XXX.

VOICES OF THE PAST.

MORRISON KENRIC was in Colorado, looking after certain business interests, when he received Miss Fish's telegram which was couched in terms sufficiently alarming to make him set out at once for Briarville. He announced his coming by a message almost as long as a letter, insisting that Harry must have a surgeon from Savannah, or even from Philadelphia, at all of which Harry laughed.

"I shall be dancing a hornpipe by the time my anxious parent arrives," he declared. "It will take some time to come from Colorado here."

But his father arrived even a day earlier than the earliest day he was expected, and it happened to be the morning after Memory Waits's funeral. Miss Penny was sitting on the front porch, disheartened and inert, when her old-time friend was driven up to her gate.

Morrison Kenric had received several telegrams at various points on his journey, reassuring him as to his son's condition, but no letter ; he was, therefore, ignorant of all details regarding the accident, nor even did he know the place where his son was staying ; for neither Miss Fish nor Miss Wallis nor Harry, in their correspondence, had ever mentioned Miss Penny's home

by any distinctive title, nor named the family, and Kenric heard of Lancaster's Farm for the first time, when he arrived at the hotel. He was, therefore, totally unprepared for meeting any ghosts of the past. The name *Lancaster's Farm*, indeed, had struck him as an odd coincidence reminding him a little sadly of the days when "poor, poor Penny"—as he now thought of her—used to prattle of her ambition to "own land" and "to see things grow." But Penny, he was assured, was dead; and even did he believe her to be among the living, he could not believe it to be within the possibilities that she should attain to the possession of this well-ordered farm, which he beheld from his carriage windows, spread out in smiling thrift, under the summer skies. He wondered a little whether the people of the farm might not be of Penny's kindred, and he decided that he would inquire. He had never told his son about this early friend: he had been a little ashamed, for one thing, that he had asked the tavern-girl to marry him. He knew, indeed, that he had never been in love with her, but partly through pique, partly through generosity, he had been entirely in earnest about marrying her, so much in earnest that he had ever since felt immensely grateful to her for refusing him. Even his rescue, which she had achieved with courage so cool and unfaltering, hardly seemed to him deserving of deeper gratitude; and then, besides, Alice, his wife, poor, restless, exacting Alice, whom he certainly had not married for love,—Alice had not been pleased that Harry should know anything about Penny Lancaster. So much had he deprecated his wife's displeasure, he had been guilty of a tacit subterfuge in withholding from his family and friends the knowledge that the woman who achieved his rescue during the war, was the girl of the Little Warrenton tavern. But he had not forgotten Penny. It gave him a thrill of genuine delight, akin to the old joy of youth, to feel that possibly these Lancasters had known her, or could tell of her. He did not recognize the plump, comely, middle-aged, sun-browned woman sitting on the porch. To him, Penny had always been the personification of perennial youth.

But Miss Penny knew him; even had she not known that he was coming, she would have recognized him,

for an easy life, and careful attention to health and dress had preserved his youthful looks almost unimpaired, and though his hair was turning gray, and he wore glasses, he passed for some years younger than he really was. It pleased Miss Wallis to fancy him the older brother of his son. To Miss Penny it seemed as though it had been but yesterday when she bade him farewell on the muddy roadside in the mist of the dawn ; but she perceived with wounded pride that he did not recognize her. “ Am I then so changed ? ” she wondered.

Years of open-air life had given Miss Penny steady nerves. She made no sign of recognition ; she said to herself that she had been forgotten, and that since Morrison Kenric came as a stranger, as a stranger would she receive him. She rose, as he came upon the porch, and returned his salutation with an awkward stiffness.

“ I am Mr. Kenric,” he said, and Miss Penny had an irritating consciousness that he felt he was impressing her with his importance.

“ You are a day earlier than you were expected,” she replied ; “ but I don’t suppose it will make any difference.”

“ My son ? ” he asked eagerly

“ He is doing very well ; only he would go out yesterday, and he over-fatigued himself. I think he is asleep just now. Perhaps it would be better to see the ladies before going to him ? ”

“ Thanks,” said Kenric, bowing. “ I suppose I have the pleasure of addressing Mrs. Lancaster ? ”

All at once Miss Penny’s self-restraint gave way, and she did not know whether she most wanted to laugh or to cry. But she did neither ; after a short struggle she said simply, and quite as though accounting for herself to some stranger :

“ I am not married ; I am Penthesilea Lancaster ; and this is my farm.”

Kenric stood agape with incredulity ; *this* his friend Penny Lancaster to whom he said farewell on that lonely mountain roadside so long ago—whom for years he had believed to be dead ? He felt as if he were in a dream ; but as the truth forced itself upon him, he sprang forward to grasp her hands, and for a brief instant he and Penny Lancaster were young again.

"My old friend, Penny?" he stammered. "Can it be? Why, dear Penny, they wrote me you were dead."

"You were easily satisfied of my death," said Miss Penny, a little coldly, as she withdrew her hands.

Kenric colored. Yes; he had been easily satisfied of her death, but he had never doubted that she married Rosser. "They wrote me that *Mrs. Rosser* was dead," he said, in awkward explanation.

"It wasn't me," Miss Penny informed him, dryly.

"And—and wasn't your sweetheart true to you, then, Penny?" But seeing that she hesitated, he hastened to add, "Forgive the question; I'm an old friend, you know."

"Yes; he was true," Miss Penny sighed. "But he was—killed—by some of our men—the day I left you there on the roadside." And to her own exceeding surprise, the tears rushed to her eyes. She did not like ever to think of Luke Rosser's death; it oppressed her painfully to remember the tragedy to which she owed her escape from a marriage that was odious to her, but she knew that Luke had loved her to the full capacity of his narrow soul.

"Because of me?" Kenric asked, with a pang of keen regret.

"It was his own fault," said Miss Penny, briefly. "And I never have been sorry for what I did."

"And with such a claim upon me, why have you never written to me, Penny, in all these years? There must have been some time when I might have helped you?" Morrison Kenric asked with a strong sense of injury; for he felt himself, somehow, defrauded that no opportunity had been given him to pay off his debt of gratitude.

"I have done well enough as you see," Miss Penny made reply with a just pride.

He smiled. "It is like a fairy-tale, my dear Penny! You have realized your ambition, and are mistress of a farm of your own. I hope you have found happiness along with success."

"I've been fairly happy," Miss Penny answered, with a sigh. "There isn't any steady happiness in this world, I reckon."

“And to think that my son—*my son* should have been here all these weeks, and never have told me whose roof sheltered him !”

“He had never heard of Penny Lancaster,” said Miss Penny, with covert reproach.

Kenric sighed. “It is by the name of Rosser he knows you ; it was by that name I told him how you had saved his father from a prisoner’s fate. I was so sure you had married—I wish you had told him ! I wish you had written to me !”

Miss Penny smiled gravely. “There are many lessons to be learned on a farm, she said, after a little pause. “Waiting is one of these lessons.”

Kenric only half understood her. “I should have been so glad to help you,” he said, in a vexed tone ; “but now you need no help of mine.”

“I don’t think I ever could have needed it,” said Miss Penny, serenely ; “as I got along without it. Will you come in ?” she asked, presently. “And I will let Miss Fish and Miss Wallis know that you are here.”

She led Morrison Kenric into her parlor, a room furnished with the utmost propriety that a serviceable ugliness could devise—black walnut chairs and sofa covered with black mohair, a marble-topped table with a huge Bible in gilded morocco, and a green glass lamp ; and some shells in a big glass jar on the mantel-shelf, and some dried grasses in a stone jar on the hearth, and upon a bracket between the windows, an alabaster vase with doves upon the brim, the exact counterpart of a vase Kenric remembered well, in a little New England parlor, years ago. He wondered how it was that its fellow should have found its way into Penny Lancaster’s parlor. The sight of it made him sigh with the burden of many recollections ; it reminded him of his Cousin Laura to whom the passionate devotion of his early youth had been given, and whose fate he had never been able to learn ; and then, by a natural transition, he thought of the woman he was soon to marry, almost enough his junior to be his daughter, and quite handsome enough to make him the envy of younger men ; and yet, just now, he wished he were not going to meet her. Not that he was not fond of her ; indeed,

he assured himself that he was quite as much in love as a younger man might be, but to meet her under Penny Lancaster's roof, was too much for his serenity. He remembered, suddenly, that Miss Wallis knew all about his friend, the Georgia tavern-girl—except that he had once asked her to marry him—why had Miss Wallis never mentioned the name of Lancaster in her letters? Possibly—ah, *most probably*, Miss Fish, for some ridiculous, occult reason of state, had counselled the *propriety* of ignoring Penny Lancaster. Miss Fish had possessed great influence over his wife Alice; perhaps she had known how to acquire an equally weighty influence over the beautiful Anastasia. He frowned and sighed, for he had hoped to be rid of Miss Fish. And then he thought again of Penny Lancaster, not as the Georgia tavern-girl, but as the mistress of this thriving farm; and almost he could have believed himself dreaming but for the acute sense of inferiority that beset him. He who had followed with ease and comfort the paths already smoothed for him, was called a successful man; but this woman had had a career, had struggled and conquered and had achieved her ambition. Not that he cared in the least to change places with her, but—he had cherished no ambitions from the day he left Little Warrenton.

“It would have ruined her life to have married me, when I was such a fool as to make love to her,” he said to himself with a shrug.

And Miss Penny, on her way up stairs, had said to herself, “Well! all I’ve won by my hard work is the right to till my own land, maybe; but I’m thankful I had the sense not to marry a man that is fitted so well in his clothes at this time o’ life. There’s no farmer in *him*.”

The old romance was dead.

Miss Fish and Miss Wallis were in a room overlooking the lawn at the side of the house, but as the windows did not command a view of the road to town, they had not seen the carriage that brought Mr. Kenric, and they knew nothing of his arrival until Miss Penny announced it.

Miss Fish gave her a quick and searching glance; but Miss Penny’s placid visage revealed nothing. She had

never had a doubt that Miss Fish knew who she was, but she had long ago made up her mind that Miss Fish should never be the wiser for that knowledge.

"The drama has begun!" Miss Wallis exclaimed, with a mock-tragedy air; but she was very pale, and her lips trembled as she said to Miss Fish, "Pray go down; I am not ready yet."

"I am sure you are very well just as you are," said Miss Fish, going toward the door; "except that you haven't your usual color."

Miss Wallis glanced at herself in the mirror, and certainly she had reason to be satisfied with her attire, a very simple morning-dress of some soft fabric of a pale gray tint, with a glowing red hibiscus fastening the delicate cloud of lace that half-hid and half-revealed her rounded throat. She had the merit of being always dressed, for she possessed an artistic taste that made her delight in adorning herself for her own pleasure, as some people delight in adorning a room, though there be no one to invite to enter. Certainly her toilette was not at fault, and yet she repeated, "I am not ready; I will come later."

Miss Penny had left the room, but Miss Wallis ran out into the hall and caught her arm, just as she was descending the stair. "Don't go!" she whispered, hurriedly. "I want you!" Miss Fish passed on, and Miss Wallis drew Miss Penny back into the room and locked the door.

"Miss Lancaster," she panted, "can you understand what it is to be tempted to a meanness, not for the sake of some one you love, but for the sake of the dear love of some one?"

"No," said Miss Penny, coldly. She was of too practical as turn for such subtleties.

Miss Wallis smiled faintly. She was very pale, yet in each cheek glowed a spot of feverish color. "Oh, I wish, *how* I wish I never had come here," she sighed.

The color flamed in Miss Penny's face. "I have nothing to do with your coming," she said. "And I shall not care when you are gone."

Miss Wallis shook her head. "It is *fate*. Don't you believe in fate, Miss Lancaster?"

"I believe in plain speech, said Miss Penny, bluntly, "and I don't understand you."

Miss Wallis laughed nervously. "That is what Miss Fish is always saying. And—I don't know that I understand myself. I seem to be two people. I wish I hadn't come, and yet I cannot be sorry I came, for I feel that it is good to know you. I—I have no mother. She died when I was so young, before I had left school."

Miss Wallis paused, her eyes full of a timid appeal: but Miss Penny remained silent. She was not open to flattery; her face took on a severe expression.

"Do not look at me like that!" Anastasia entreated, turning her face away. "I—I am in great distress." Her voice shook slightly, and she laid her hand upon the edge of the table, to steady herself.

"What can I do for you?" Miss Penny asked, in a perfunctory tone.

Miss Wallis threw herself upon her knees, and clasped Miss Penny's knees in a close embrace. "Am I not fair?" she cried. "Am I not beautiful, even?"

"Yes; you are," Miss Penny made blunt acknowledgment, struggling to free herself. "But let me go."

"Men have called me fair ever since I could remember;" Anastasia went on, heedless of Miss Penny's struggles; "but no praise of men ever touched my heart until now. There is one I love as my life—in whose eyes I rejoice to be fair, and yet—to-day—to-day—I am afraid or ashamed, I know not which, to show myself in his presence."

"Do you mean—Morrison Kenric?" said Miss Penny, still struggling to free herself.

"Yes, it is he!" said Anastasia, hiding her face against Miss Penny's knees. "I am his promised wife! Oh, think what it is to be that! In his eyes I know that I am fair to look upon; but Ah, the misery of knowing myself—a fraud."

"Yes! You are a fraud!" cried Miss Penny, unclasping Anastasia's hands, and pushing her violently away. "I have known that this long time."

Miss Wallis steadied herself against the lounge, but did not rise. "What have you known?" she asked with dilating eyes.

Miss Penny had walked away to the other end of the room, but she came quickly back. She was greatly agitated.

"Why did you talk to me as you did that day under the cherry-trees?" she demanded with indignant vehemence. "Why have you striven to surprise my confidence, and to compel my sympathy, though you—you dared not be frank with me? Did you think me a blind fool?"

"Ah, no! Ah, no, no!" murmured Anastasia. She was still on her knees, her right arm resting on the lounge, her left hand hanging by her side. She made no resistance when Miss Penny stooped and caught up this hand, but the color surged over her face.

Almost rudely, Miss Penny pushed back the broad gold band that fitted closely a few inches above the beautiful wrist and laying her finger upon a deep, irregular scar, said, in a tone of grave severity:

"I remember when that scar was made."

Miss Wallis did not shrink, nor draw away her arm, and Miss Penny continued in the same tone:

"You were little better than a baby when Morrison Kenric brought you down in his arms from the pile of lumber at Perdico Mill, and tied up that cut with his handkerchief. Though you go by your step-father's name, I have known who you are from the day I saw you in the carriage that was near running over me. I wonder anybody should miss the likeness! You are Nannie Lyndham, my sister's child, *Little Nannie*"—Miss Penny's voice broke into a sob, but she quickly recovered herself. "And you are ashamed of me," she went on bitterly, "because—because I am not such a one as Miss Fish—I thank my God!"

"No; that indeed you are not!" said Anastasia, with hysterical laughter.

"And I am ashamed of *you*," cried Miss Penny, throwing the girl's hand violently from her.

"Oh, indeed, indeed, you are mistaken!" cried Anastasia, springing up, and throwing her arms around Miss Penny. "Believe me, I am *proud* of you, indeed I am! But, oh, if you only knew! I've heard him talk of—of Little Warrenton—and *the tavern*. I could not endure to have him know my grandfather kept that tavern."

She covered her face with her hands.

For a little while Miss Penny was silent. "Do you mean," said she at last, "that he would not marry you?"

"It might—it might make a difference," faltered Miss Wallis.

"You miserable coward," cried Miss Penny, with angry contempt. "Is it *my silence* you wish to bespeak? Rest assured he shall never know the truth from me. I renounce you!"

Miss Wallis threw herself upon the lounge and buried her face in her arms; and Miss Penny walked angrily away. But at the door she paused and looked back, while the tears gathered slowly in her eyes.

"I cannot forget," she said sadly, "that once you were the dearest thing in life to me; and I warn you, Nannie, I warn you," she repeated, her voice trembling with earnestness, "that you are living *a lie*, and that sooner or later a lie bears bitter fruit; and the later, the bitterer."

Miss Wallis, when Miss Penny left her remained as she had thrown herself upon the lounge, her face hidden in her arms, her thoughts in a tumult. "Ah, it is as I suspected all along," she whispered to herself, "she knows me for what I really am—and a word from her—might shatter all my future!"

And with this thought Miss Wallis sprang up. "Yes! I *am* a coward!" she cried aloud. "She does well to despise me. I despise myself. But what a reprieve to know that she will not tell!"

She laughed and ran to the glass. "The ordeal is past, and it has left its mark upon me. I must bathe my face and go down. Some day, when the proper time comes, I shall be glad to tell him all—all for this burden of a secret *ages* one so."

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOPES AND FEARS.

WHEN Miss Penny went out disconsolate from her niece's presence, she shut herself up in her own room, where she sat a long time lost in painful thought. Never had she so sorely felt the need of sympathy : angry and hurt, and disappointed, it seemed to her as if her little world that she had thought so secure, must soon slip from her controlling grasp, and she knew not upon whom she could count in the dark and lonely days that were coming. For Miss Penny understood clearly that she must give up Marjorie, the light of her life. In that long drive, when she had brought the girl home from Johnson's, Marjorie had dutifully told her the happy secret of Harry's love, told it in the serene faith that nothing now could part the two hearts a great peril had united—nothing but inexorable death, and Miss Penny had found never a word to say against love's decree. Was it not in accordance with the laws of nature that changes must come? Only, Miss Penny had not looked for changes to come so suddenly, and to leave her so forlorn. Undoubtedly she desired Marjorie's happiness with a great unselfishness, for Harry Kenric and his father, and his father's prospective bride—Miss Penny's own niece!—were not of Miss Penny's restricted world, and Marjorie would belong to them henceforth, and not to her ; she would become like them and grow alien to the old home.

Obeying an impulse for which she could not have accounted, Miss Penny rose and studied her face in the little cracked mirror over her bureau. "I must have had some good looks once," she murmured ; "but what does it matter now? Penthesilea, you are growing old, and a lonely old age is before you."

She sighed and turned away, but still her thoughts pursued her. "We are told that whatsoever we sow

that we shall reap," she mused. "Now I have been chiefly concerned to sow oats, and corn, and wheat, and the things of my farm, and these things I reap. But I have sowed also, in my time, a devoted affection, and what do I reap? My sister's child, for whose sake, in her dear babyhood I could have died, is ashamed to be known as my niece; and the friend for whose safety I would have perjured my soul in a bitter mockery of marriage—how easily was he persuaded of my death! And Marjorie—she will leave me, leave me for a stranger!"

Miss Penny was standing by her window, looking out upon a fair and cheering prospect, orchards bending with fruit, fields ripening for the harvest, rich pastures encircled by wooded slopes, and far away, hills beyond hills, rising in green billows against the vastness of the sky—a charming prospect that she had loved to gaze upon.

"I care not Fortune, what you me deny,
You cannot rob me of free nature's grace."

she quoted, softly, with a sort of patient content in the joy that still remained to her.

But Miss Penny was of too practical a temper to indulge this musing fit for any length of time, and happily for her, she had now less time than usual to spare. She reflected, wisely, that she could shape her life only so far as energetic duty might shape a life, but that the rest must be left to God's ordering. To such a spirit there may come surprise, disappointment, surrender, perhaps, but never the bitterness of self-reproach. And remembering that her uncle also, no less than herself, must suffer in the change that was coming, she felt herself drawn to him now by a common trouble, and hoping to find some ease for the burden of her heart, she went to seek him.

Mr. Lancaster was under the scuppernong arbor carving a cherry-stone as a souvenir for Miss Wallis; he had a great liking for Miss Wallis.

Miss Penny sat down sadly beside him. There was plenty to do, but she had no heart for work; she wished that she too could carve cherry-stones. With abrupt brevity, she informed her uncle of Kenric's arrival.

The cherry-stone and the knife dropped from Mr.

Lancaster's trembling hands. "Penthesilea! Penthesilea!" he exclaimed. "The rift in the fiddle! The end is coming! He will claim Marjorie! Don't you remember, Penthesilea, what I told you? They are her mother's kin; they will take her away. And I don't want to give her up; no! no!"

"She has come to that age," said Miss Penny with a sad smile, "when you will have to give her up. The law of love, and the law of death, mortals cannot escape."

To her surprise, her uncle accepted this reminder with satisfaction. "You mean Harry Kenric?" he asked, rubbing his hands. "Ah, *that* will make it all right! And what a load it will take off my mind. It'll square all things beautifully, beautifully."

"What in the world do you mean, Uncle Joe?"

"Never mind! never mind!" he returned, impatiently. "I needn't tell all I know." And he picked up his knife and resumed his work upon the cherry-stone.

"Do you mean that you will not tell about Marjorie's kinship?" Miss Penny asked.

"Let me alone, Penthesilea; let me alone," said Mr. Lancaster peevishly. "I wish I hadn't ever told you a word. There ain't any need as I can see."

"Morrison Kenric is not of our world," said Miss Penny, slowly. "Suppose he should not like such a marriage for his son?"

Mr. Lancaster dropped the knife and cherry-stone a second time, and his countenance fell. "You reckon *that*, Penthesilea?" he asked, dejectedly. "Ah, good Lord!" He leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, and his forehead resting on his hands, and sighed deeply.

"I'm sure I don't understand you!" said Miss Penny, in perplexity.

"Let me alone, Penthesilea!" he exclaimed, peevishly. You are always *bossing* me. I tell you, it's nobody's business but mine. And I ain't well. I'm going to lie down. If Morrison Kenric asks to see me—why, I won't! Tell him to wait."

Miss Penny laughed. "I hardly think he'll ask for you, to-day," she said.

Mr. Lancaster no longer gave heed to her. He had

succumbed to that cumulative depression which began with the crack in his violin, a depression that now urged him to hide himself in his own room, away from Morrison Kenric, the man of all others Mr. Joe Lancaster dreaded to see.

It was a long nap Harry Kenric took that morning. Before he waked, Miss Fish had ample time to give her version of the wreck of Kimberly Bridge—a version in which no mention was made of Marjorie. Miss Wallis, who at last had come down-stairs, contented herself with sitting by in lovely silence, a charming contrast to Miss Fish's garrulity, which lasted until the message came that Harry Kenric was awake and wished to see his father.

Kenric saw his son alone. The young man was in an arm-chair, his lame ankle resting upon a cushioned bench, his arm in a sling. The tears sprang to his father's eyes at sight of him. "My dear, dear boy!" he faltered, as he bent over, and laid his cheek against his boy's yellow hair. He had always been a very demonstrative father, and in this moment of intense feeling, he stooped to press a kiss upon the smooth, young forehead.

"Oh, I'm all right, sir," said Harry brushing away a tear that might have been his own or his father's, he hardly knew which. "You know I always did wish to have an adventure."

His father smiled with a sad gravity. "A sorry adventure, my dear boy! To say nothing of your own broken bones, it has cost a human life."

"Ah, yes, sir," sighed Harry. "Poor Memory Waits! A brave fellow he was; but no whit less brave than Marjorie."

"Marjorie?" repeated his father, with quick apprehension. "Who is 'Marjorie'? And what had she to do with the affair of the bridge?"

"You didn't get my letter, then?" asked Harry, with deepening color. "I wrote you some days before the accident, and told you all about Marjorie."

"I've had no such letter."

"Never mind," said Harry, serenely; "you will be able to see for yourself. It was Marjorie saved my life."

"Marjorie?" repeated his father again. "Miss Fish has been giving me a full account of the disaster. She said nothing at all about 'Marjorie.' She told me it was Memory Waits to whom you owe your life."

"Miss Fish's version," said Harry, in a distinctly hold-cheap accent. "She wasn't there—how should she know? Memory Waits meant to save me, no doubt, but Marjorie was before him; she was well on to the bridge, and had given me warning, so that I had time to jump, before Memory Waits rushed after her and threw her on to the road. Miss Fish, indeed!"

"And who is this Marjorie?"

"She is Miss Lancaster's cousin," said Harry, eagerly; "but not a bit like Miss Lancaster, except in being industrious, and all that—"

"Miss Lancaster's cousin," interrupted his father pulling at his moustaches, and frowning. "Pray, Harry, what does all this mean?"

"It means, sir," answered Harry, his color deepening, and his voice trembling, "that this young girl is very dear to your son."

Kenric was silent with dismay.

"She is everything you could desire in a daughter," Harry declared.

"This is very sudden," said his father, at last in a constrained voice.

"Not sudden at all, sir. If you had received my letter, you would have seen that it has been going on ever since I came."

"I trust in Heaven you've not committed yourself, Harry; given the girl no promise?"

Harry laughed. "No promise is needed. She knows I love her, and that my love is faithful. I will hear all you have to say, sir; but until you see her, pray do not say anything."

His father regarded him with an indulgent smile. "You are so young, Harry," he said, "I understand the situation perfectly; isolated propinquity. At your age, even a little older, indeed, I fancied myself in love, and with a rustic beauty."

Harry's face flushed. "Wait until you see Marjorie," he repeated.

"I was very much in earnest," his father continued,

deftly avoiding any direct rejoinder. "I believed myself, at the time, really in love with her. I went so far as to ask her to marry me ; but she had the good sense to refuse me, at which I have rejoiced ever since. It would have ruined my life, and ruined hers, had she married me."

"You never truly loved her, sir," said Harry, with respectful firmness.

His father felt the full force of this argument and colored. "Let us put an end to this profitless discussion," he said, in a tone of authority that would have gratified Miss Fish. "You will allow me to observe again that you are very young. I must caution you against youthful precipitancy. For the girl's sake, as well as for your own you will do well to wait."

"For what? For how long?" Harry demanded, impetuously.

"For—developments," his father answered, in default of any more definite term, and little dreaming what developments were at hand.

Harry laughed with gay confidence. "I need only wait until you see Marjorie," he declared. "She is not a girl of fashion, I grant you, but ah ! she is *genuine*."

"I say nothing against the girl," his father returned, frowning—

"And what is there to object to in the Lancasters?" Harry interrupted warmly, as his father hesitated. "They are sterling people. Every one acknowledges Miss Lancaster's worth ; she is a woman in a thousand. Her mother was a Donald, and they are of the best people in Georgia."

His father could not restrain a laugh, remembering how the old boast of the Donald blood used to amuse him. "Miss Wallis herself told me so !" said Harry waxing warmer. "And as for Marjorie's father, though he is broken down, like many another man of his years, in this part of the country, he has had the education of a gentleman. You should hear him quote Latin, sir. Mr. Joe Lancaster is one of those men that——"

"Gentleman Joe of the piney-woods Cross-roads !" exclaimed Morrison Kenric, in violent surprise.

"Ah, you know him, then?" cried Harry, a slow

intuition dawning in his mind. "Perhaps you knew Miss Lancaster herself?"

"No; I have never seen him," his father answered, evading the latter question; "but I heard enough of him when I was in Little Warrenton, years ago. Gentleman Joe, they called him. He kept a Cross-roads store in the piney-woods, where he eked out a lazy, shiftless existence, carving knick-knacks, and scraping a fiddle. But I believe he was considered an honest sort of fellow."

Harry colored darkly. "He is Marjorie's father," he said, almost defiantly. "A harmless, kindly old gentleman. And as for Miss Lancaster—what a heart is hers! Nothing could exceed her goodness to me."

His father looked at him a moment, in silence, with a strange smile in his eyes, half-sad, half-tender. At last, he burst forth, impetuously:

"Harry, don't you know—don't you guess who this Miss Lancaster is?"

Harry stared, speechless.

"She is the woman who rescued me, during the war."

"*Miss Lancaster!*" exclaimed Harry, agape with astonishment. "Why—you said *her* name was *Rosser*."

"I know. She was to have married Rosser. I did not think it worth while to obscure the narrative by so many different names," his father explained in some embarrassment.

A slow smile broke over the young man's face, a smile partly of amusement, partly of respectful sympathy. "My dear father—perhaps she was also the woman—you once loved?" he said, gently.

"Ah, she has given you some hint, then?" his father exclaimed, with a frown of annoyance. "Women never forget such things, and perhaps it is not reasonable to expect that she would not tell——"

"Oh, indeed, you are mistaken!" cried Harry. "She has never said a word, not a word. It is wonderful how she has kept silence. I told her about that rescue, one evening, and she sat and listened to it all without a syllable that could give a hint she had had anything to do with it. Marjorie may be proud of her kinship!"

Kenric winced; but Harry did not see it. On his ardent young heart, this unexpected revelation had made a deep impression. He saw, clearly enough, the wide difference between his father, with his polish and elegance, and Miss Lancaster, who with all her many excellencies, yet was lacking in the graces that distinguished Morrison Kenric. (But for all that, Marjorie—*was Marjorie* unique and adorable.)

What were Miss Lancaster's feelings towards his father, after these many years, he did not care to ask; but he fancied that he understood, now, the secret of her tenderness and indulgence towards himself, and his heart was eager to give some expression to the sentiment of reverent and grateful admiration with which he regarded the woman who had been so faithful a friend in time of need, the woman who also had been a mother to Marjorie. It was no transient emotion that moved him. That afternoon, while his father and Miss Fish and Miss Wallis were out driving, he sent an urgent message for Miss Penny to come to him.

Miss Penny was shelling beans in the large store-room that opened on the gallery leading to the kitchen; but when Harry's man, a solemn, middle-aged sample of dignity, brought her the message, she dropped her pan, scattering the beans, in a great fright. "What is the matter?" she demanded, anxiously. "Is he—is he worse?"

"Apparently quite the same, ma'am," replied Robbins, with stiff propriety looking neither to the right nor left. "He gives his orders, and I obey." Robbins prided himself upon being a gentleman's gentleman *comme il y en a peu*.

Miss Penny pulled off her hat and her big apron, washed her hands in the tin basin that stood ever ready, wiped them on the big roller-towel, and went up to Harry's room, wondering if what he wished to say to her might concern Marjorie.

"Dear Miss Lancaster," said Harry, with effusion, as she entered, "if I could rise, I would not receive you, sitting."

"Oh," said Miss Penny, brusquely, being a little confused by his manner, "I don't see any need for all that

—ceremony. What's the matter? Didn't your dinner suit you?"

"My dinner was perfection, but I wanted to see you," he answered, and held out his hand.

Miss Penny with growing confusion, and hardly conscious what she did, put her hand in his, and felt him draw her nearer.

"Won't you kiss me, Miss Lancaster?" he whispered, shyly.

The request seemed to Miss Penny unpardonably impertinent. She resented being made sport of. "Kiss you, you saucy young monkey!" she exclaimed, with angry recoil. "I've a mind to box you soundly."

"Dear Miss Lancaster!" said Harry, ruefully. "Are you not willing that I should love you?"

"You impudent jackanapes! Is this your gratitude for all the care I've lavished upon you?" cried Miss Penny, trembling with indignant rage. The interview which Harry had expected to prove so rich in a charming sentiment, threatened to become grotesquely ludicrous. Miss Penny, believing herself the victim of a joke devised between this idle invalid and the stately Robbins, was furious accordingly. "Make love to me, indeed! Have you no respect for my gray hairs?"

Now Miss Penny had hardly six gray hairs in her head.

"I don't see the gray hairs," returned Harry. "I don't know they are there; but I have the profoundest respect, all the same. My father has just been telling me that you—*you* are the brave woman who rescued him; and you were too modest to tell me yourself! I could have gone down on my knees to you, that evening in the pavilion, only to have known it."

Miss Penny had dropped upon a chair, ashamed, and sorry, and glad, and vexed with herself, and distinctly conscious that she was now beginning to reap a harvest that did not grow in fields. "It was all over and done with so long ago," she faltered, the tears in her eyes.

"It will never be over and done with so long as I live!" cried Harry warmly. "I must love you for that all my days. And won't you kiss me, now, Miss Lancaster?"

And between laughing and crying, Miss Penny kissed

him. "How could I ever dream what you meant?" she stammered, wiping her eyes.

"I want you to—to think of me as a son," Harry entreated. "For Marjorie's dear sake, you know."

"Marjorie!" ejaculated Miss Penny; and not a word more could she say.

"I have told my father all," pursued Harry, eagerly. "He needs only to see her, to understand how impossible it is, I should ever give her up."

"And your father objects to Marjorie?" Miss Penny said, with slow interrogation.

"He will wait until he see her," Harry asserted, confidently. "When is she coming downstairs? Won't you take her a note from me, dear Miss Lancaster?"

He was absolutely sure that Miss Penny was on his side, but Miss Penny said "No."

"Only to beg her to come down; only to say that my father wishes to see her?" entreated Harry, in acute surprise.

"No," said Miss Penny, again.

"You—surely *you* are not against us?" stammered Harry.

"I will be no go-between," said Miss Penny, inexorably.

"But," remonstrated Harry, perplexed and distressed, "there is nothing clandestine about it."

"No," said Miss Penny, turning irately away; "no more clandestine than a cattle-show. And are *we* cattle do you think, that Marjorie is to be summoned before your father, for him to pass judgment upon her?"

And she swept from the room, leaving Harry astounded and humiliated, with tears of rage and shame in his eyes.

In his trouble and perplexity, he decided to appeal to Miss Wallis, between whom and himself there existed a frank friendship; as soon, therefore, as she had returned from her drive, he sent for her, and she came promptly at his bidding.

"Oh, you stupid boy!" she cried, with peals of laughter, when she had heard his story. "That ever you should have made such a blunder! Confess with me now, that you admire Miss Lancaster's spirit? You must remember that she comes of the blood of the

Donalds, who are entitled to hold up their heads with the best."

"But you know I didn't mean——"

"Oh, how many times are you going to tell me that you *didn't mean a cattle-show*?"

"Well, what, then, is to be done?" said Harry, with a little rueful smile. "You owe it to me to take my part, for I might have made it horrid for you, you know but instead of that——"

"Instead of that, you've been a model of filial acquiescence?" Miss Wallis suggested, laughing.

"Yes! And of filial delicacy," Harry declared. "I've been too discreet, too considerate, too respectful to appeal to my father on the score of that fellow-feeling that ought to make him wondrous kind. A young fellow in love ought to command the reverent sympathy of an old fellow in the same predicament."

"*Predicament!*" exclaimed Miss Wallis. "But your father is not *old* you will please remember."

"No; he is not old; he is young, he is ardent, he is sublimated devotion; and——"

"Harry!"

"And he has only to see Marjorie, to comprehend that I can never give her up."

"It will be better to let their meeting come about in the natural order of things," said Miss Wallis. "Do you not see that it will never, never do to let Marjorie suspect that she is to be on exhibition?"

"Of course you are right," Harry returned, with a mighty sigh. "But—delays are dangerous, you know; and here is Miss Fish, clamoring to get us all away from here. Hang Miss Fish! I wish she were where all the other fishes are!"

Miss Wallis laughed. "Poor Miss Fish!" she said, amiably; and then she sighed. "If you only knew how anxious *I* am to get away from here, Harry," she murmured.

"*You!*" exclaimed Harry. "Why, this is the land, just here, on this farm, where it is always afternoon; what better could one ask in summer-time!"

"It is certainly very charming," Miss Wallis admitted.

"And I should die at that hotel!" Harry declared, with vehemence. "The noise, and the bustle—you've

no idea how nervous I am, since that tumble down the bluff. I *must* have quiet and repose."

"Of course," said Miss Wallis, smiling. "We have only to enlist Dr. Griffith on our side."

"Ah, what an angel of a diplomatist you are!"

Miss Wallis shook her head. "No one can be more wise than destiny," she murmured, smiling faintly.

"I wonder if she is not happy?" thought Harry, uneasily, when she was gone.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"A SWEET, COMPLAINING GRIEVANCE."

THE next morning there came about the much-desired meeting between Morrison Kenric and Marjorie; and it came about through Miss Penny's management, after all, though without any planning for that end.

Marjorie, the Doctor had said, was suffering from nervous prostration; but Miss Penny did not know what that meant, and when she found that Marjorie had no fever, that her headache was gone, and her appetite was returning, she thought the time had come for the girl to be about her duties; moping, in Miss Penny's estimation, was the worst possible thing for body and mind. Moreover, Miss Penny had found her Uncle Joe impossible to manage; she was at her wits' end what to do with a man who said he was ill, yet refused to see the doctor, who kept his bed, though he had no fever, and no pain, and no loss of appetite. In such a case, Miss Penny felt that she must rely upon Marjorie for a cure.

"It is nothing but a whim, Marjorie, I am sure," said Miss Penny; "but if he lies up in bed in this way, it will end in making him ill. You must coax him out."

So Marjorie dressed, and came downstairs, the next morning, which was the third day after Memory Waits' death. Very pale she was, and very sad; but she found it a relief to escape from her thoughts to the free air, and she was glad to see her garden again. She

was gathering a bouquet wherewith to cheer her Daddy Joe, when Morrison Kenric chanced to espy her. He could not see her face for the big hat she wore, but he had an intuition that this must be the girl upon whom his son, unfortunately, had set his callow affections. The opportunity was not to be slighted; he strode across the grass, and was by her side before she had seen him.

Marjorie was not afflicted, like poor old Gentleman Joe, with a dread of encountering Morrison Kenric; she had, indeed, a strong desire to meet him; and she could not have met him under more favorable circumstances. For the flower-garden was Marjorie's own domain, and she had so long been undisputed mistress here, that she could hardly fail to feel entirely at her ease when she welcomed a stranger to her blooming borders. For the time being, this handsome, elaborate, stately man of manners was her guest, and she smiled upon him hospitably, and talked to him of her flowers, with an utter unconsciousness of being under inspection, until he said:

"I believe it is you to whom my son feels indebted for his life. I have to thank you for a brave deed."

"Oh!" said Marjorie, her face flushing painfully. "It seemed easy to do." She pushed back her hat, and as she did so, Kenric caught the likeness that Miss Fish had seen.

"Strange! Strange!" he murmured, with a slight start. "A *second* reminder!"

"Strange that one should try to save—a life?" said Marjorie, smiling. "Any one would do that."

"Perhaps so," Kenric responded, somewhat absently. It had surprised him—rather unpleasantly; for who is ever pleased at the sudden refutation of a cherished prejudice?—to find that this girl was not "rustic," at least in any unfavorable sense. The impression she made in her own person, was certainly not unfavorable; but—the daughter of Gentleman Joe Lancaster of the Cross-roads store! A most undesirable connection. He could not make up his mind to accept it, and with the skill of a diplomat, he set to work to impress Marjorie with the certainty that between herself and his son there was a great gulf fixed, that love was powerless to

bridge. Apropos of the rescue at Kimberly Bridge, he enlarged with a pardonable pride upon his son's talents, and the promise of his youth, spoke of the loss his death might have been to the circle in which he moved, and dwelt with some emphasis upon the esteem in which Harry was held by this, and that, and the other person of distinction, in that great world of which she knew nothing.

He did not mean to be cruel ; he meant only to be wise and nip a folly in the bud. But his words had all the effect of cruelty. Marjorie felt as if he were trampling upon her heart, and his calmness seemed to her fiend-like. For Marjorie's was no obtuse, bucolic intellect ; she understood perfectly that every word he uttered in the tone of courteous thanks, was uttered with the distinct purpose of showing her how different was the world to which Harry Kenric belonged from that in which her days had passed.

Marjorie was not ambitious ; she was only tender and loving, and selfsacrificing—and very proud. She bowed her head to the stroke of fate, and gave no sign that Morrison Kenric could read. Upon a summons from Robbins that the Doctor had come, he went away to his son's room, sorely troubled to decide whether her serenity were the effect of obstinate determination, or of an obtuseness equally fatal.

In obedience to a sense of duty, Marjorie had told Miss Penny the secret of her heart, and her reward had been to find a sympathy, a tenderness, a comprehension that had forever banished the old timid shyness, so that Marjorie went to her now, sure of comfort and support. Miss Penny was in the big store-room, busy, according to her wont, like a provident farmer, sorting her collection of garden-seed.

"Cousin Penny," said Marjorie, a little frown puckering her straight brows, "are you anxious to have these strangers staying here?"

"Certainly not," replied Miss Penny, crisply ; "they may go any day they please, for aught I care."

"Can't you make them understand that the sooner they go, the better? In a kindly way, you know?"

"What is the matter, Marjorie?" Miss Penny demanded with sharp scrutiny. "It isn't so many days

since you told me that nothing could come between you and Harry Kenric to separate you."

"I had not known—his father, *then*," said Marjorie, with a sigh that was almost a sob.

"And what has he said to you?"

"Nothing that was not kind; but he has made me understand that—we are—not the same people; and——"

"We are human, I reckon," interrupted Miss Penny, tartly; "and we have hearts that won't bear to be trampled on."

By a great effort, Marjorie restrained her tears. "I have found out this," she said, turning away, "that—it is better to part."

"Evil be the day that a sentiment for the past beguiled me into opening my doors to people whose memory for me was dead, *dead!*" said Miss Penny, with bitter emphasis.

"Why," stammered Marjorie, pausing beside the door, and staring in surprise, "did you—know them before now?"

"Long ago!" Miss Penny answered. "I knew Morrison Kenric well. But don't you go to think, Marjorie, that I was any fool about him," she said, with flaming cheeks, as she put the girl aside, and went out.

Miss Penny went at once to seek Miss Wallis whom she found sitting in a listless attitude, lost in thought, near the window of her room, shadowed by the cherry trees.

"I did not mean ever to speak to you again," said Miss Penny abruptly; "but it is for Marjorie's sake; and there is never time to leave undone the good we might do. I do not know what words have passed between the man you are to marry and the child I have cared for as my own; but she has been given to understand that she is not good enough for Harry Kenric. I suppose that is what it amounts to, in plain talk."

Miss Wallis essayed to speak, but Miss Penny would not be interrupted. "I know Marjorie," she went on. "No dove could be softer or gentler; but she is as proud as any Kenric, if you like. Her heart may break, and his heart may break—which is a less matter in my sight

—but she will never see Harry Kenric again unless his father asks it.”

“They are children,” said Miss Wallis, slowly. “It will pass.”

An estimable woman was Miss Penny Lancaster but, though she came of the blood of the Donalds.

“Her manners had not that repose
Which marks the caste of Vere de Vere.”

She turned upon Miss Wallis violently; “you yourself told me that Marjorie is no longer a child,” she said, with angry eyes; “and you know very well why I came to you. It may make a difference if you tell Morrison Kenric that you too are a Lancaster.”

“I will not!” Miss Wallis cried, with answering anger. “Not yet! not yet! It is in your power to humiliate me and ruin my future—but tell him I will not! It is too much to ask that I should sacrifice myself for Marjorie—this girl of whose existence I knew nothing until I came here. Ah! until I came here, I was happy and secure.”

“If you choose to call truth a sacrifice,” said Miss Penny coldly; “it is the truth I have asked of you. As for Marjorie’s cause God will take care of that; but as for you—how can you tell that you were ever secure in a secret that means a lie? Some day the revelation will come when least you look for it, and in a way you least expect.”

Miss Wallis sprang up and threw her arms around Miss Penny. “Have some pity for me!” she entreated. “Aunt Penny! Aunt Penny! If you knew what I suffer!”

But Miss Penny pushed her away. “I will not be your Aunt, shut up in this room,” she said proudly, “and a stranger before the world. I have renounced you; rest assured, I will never be the one to proclaim my relationship to you. But what a sorry creature Morrison Kenric must have grown to be, if——”

She broke off with a harsh laugh, and abruptly quitted the room.

Marjorie had carried her bouquet to Daddy Joe, who was propped up in bed, reading a well-worn volume of Horace.

"I was a promising scholar in my youth, Marjorie," he said, with a childish satisfaction at being caught with the classic volume in his hands.

"Ah, but you ought to be out in the sunshine," said Majorie caressingly, as she laid her flowers across the page. "You are not ill ; you are just playing possum, you know."

"*Non possum*," said the student of Horace, with a feeble laugh at his feeble wit. "I don't like strangers, Majorie," he sighed clinging to her. "I am always afraid they will take you from me, some day."

"No," said Marjorie. "No, dear Daddy Joe ; I am a little plain, country girl, and these are grand people ; they will have nothing to do with me. His father has been talking to me, and I am not going to see Harry Kenric, ever again."

"What did he say to you, Marjorie ?" cried Mr. Lancaster, starting up wildly.

"Not much ; and he was very kind. But he made me understand that—that—I am not the sort of person he expects his son to marry."

"And you love the young fellow, Marjorie, my girl? That is what has come to you?" Mr. Lancaster questioned, eagerly, seeking her eyes.

Marjorie did not answer ; she pressed her two hands across her heart, and looked at him with dumb despair.

Mr. Lancaster fell back, and hid his face in the pillows with a groan.

"Oh, my Daddy Joe, my dear!" cried Marjorie, as she threw her arms around his neck and buried her face beside his. "I have only you," she sobbed. "But you do love me ; and I do love you."

"Yes, you blessed child!" he sobbed in answer.

"And we will be happy again, when these strangers are gone."

Mr. Lancaster was silent.

"You won't be always shut up in this room, dear Daddy ; you will come out into the sunshine, and see my flowers?"

"Yes, Marjorie."

"And you will have a new fiddle, and play the old tunes, and the old times shall come back."

"No, Marjorie, I reckon not; old joys never come

again. Kiss me, my child. I am going to make a great effort, Marjorie, you shall see."

Awed by his manner, Marjorie kissed him mutely.

"Have I been a good father to you, my little one?" he asked, plaintively, as he stroked her hair.

"Oh, the best, the best that ever was," sighed Marjorie, clinging to him.

"And you think your old Daddy Joe's love is enough for your young life? When these grand strangers go away you'll be quite content?"

"Quite—content," Marjorie sighed.

"No, you wouldn't! You couldn't!" said Daddy Joe, sadly. "Don't you go to think it, child. You'd pine and pine; only you'd never let on anything troubled you, for you're like your mother. But I'd know it, and t'would break my heart. You shall have your rights, Marjorie; I ain't goin' to deceive you no more."

Marjorie was troubled; she thought he was talking at random. "I am not pining," she said, forcing a smile.

"Come, now, and see my garden?"

"Not now, not now, child. I must have time to think. I'll make it all straight; don't you fear. Only leave me to think in quiet."

And with a little sigh of perplexity, Marjorie went away.

Harry Kenric, all unconscious of the interview he was interrupting, had sent for his father to see Dr. Griffith. "To think," said he, in comic amazement, "that you two should have known each other, years ago! Why didn't you speak up, like a man and own the acquaintance when I first met you! I remember I asked you the direct question."

"Now," thought the Doctor, "am I to tell this young sprig that Penny Lancaster is at the bottom of that bit of evasion? No, by thunder! None of his business." He shrugged his shoulders, and said a little pompously:

"The acquaintance had lapsed, sir, lapsed. Did not know that it was for me to renew it."

"And is all Little Warrenton established in Briarville?" asked Morrison Kenric.

"Two of the—protagonists. So to speak," answered the Doctor, and colored furiously.

"And you've not changed a hair," said Kenric, with supreme amusement, as he caught upon the Doctor's

countenance the same expression of vexed uneasiness he had been wont to exhibit in the days of his acute jealousy.

"Gray, sir! Gray as a badger," said the Doctor, in deprecation of flattery. "But the heart; the heart, sir, is the test of youth."

"About our young friend, here, if you please, Dr. Griffith?" Miss Fish broke in, harshly. She was present with a view to influencing the Doctor's opinion in accordance with her own wishes, and she was impatient at this interchange of pleasantries. "Wouldn't you advise his immediate removal to the hotel? Away from these melancholy associations, you know?"

"Um!" said the Doctor. "Does the patient desire it?"

"Not at all!" exclaimed Harry, quickly. "I'm not in the least melancholy. I'm nervous; I'd die of the noise at the hotel. But Miss Fish need not stay; there is no reason why she should martyrize herself for me."

"Harry," said Miss Fish, with lofty severity, "I've been the friend of the Kenric family all my life; and I've always been ready to serve them. I consider it *my duty* to inform your father of that lamentable infatuation to which I regret to say, you have fallen a victim. Your nervousness is a mere subterfuge."

"Hey, diddle-diddle?" exclaimed the Doctor, thrown completely off his guard by this outburst. "Hum! Ha! Beg pardon!"

"*Sir?*" said Miss Fish.

"Beg pardon!" repeated the Doctor. "Perceive I am *de trop*." (The Doctor rarely used a French expression, but when he did, he pronounced it like the plainest English). "I would remark that the patient is doing very well. Very well, indeed; just where he is. Don't approve of moving him. Let him be kept quiet. Bid you good-morning!"

He bowed to the room at large, backed towards the door, and there boldly made a stand, while Miss Fish glared at him. "Should not be moved for the next—fortnight, *at least*," he said, deliberately. "Good-morning, madam. See the young man again." And before Miss Fish had recovered speech, he had slipped through the door. As he pulled it to, after him, he shook his fist at the panels. "Piratical old meddler!"

he growled. "Want to make me *particeps criminis*, eh? Rather walk that log across Cedar Roaring, than stay shut up with you, madam! Ha!" he chuckled, beating his breast, as he clattered down stairs. "Old bachelor, but young heart. And I'm on Cupid's side, sir! God bless Marjorie, say I!"

Harry, with his head in the pillows, was exploding with laughter.

"Upon my word!" said Miss Fish, after a breathless pause.

"My dear Miss Fish," said Morrison Kenric, frowning darkly with annoyance—having seen nothing to smile at—"pray let me assure you that my son has no secrets from me. I understand the position of affairs perfectly."

"And what, then, are you going to do?" inquired Miss Fish, the Irrepressible.

Kenric walked away to the window, still frowning; he made no reply until he came back again, when he said serenely:

"Nothing precipitate."

"If you mean by that—" Miss Fish began, but was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Harry; and Robbins appeared, stiff with dignity. "What is it, Robbins?"

"If you please, sir, the man Johnson, to see *you*, sir," Robbins announced, looking at Harry with emphasis in his eyes, as well as in his voice.

"Let him come up!" said Harry, carelessly.

Robbins did not stir.

"Let him come up!" Harry repeated.

"To see *you*, sir," Robbins said again, immovable, except as to his eyes which rolled in their sockets significantly, back and forth from Harry's father to Miss Fish. "Private business, as I understand, sir. Lost property."

"I haven't lost anything, have I?" asked Harry.

"Yes, sir," Robbins answered, still rolling his eyes.

"Well, Harry," said Kenric, laughing at Robbin's agony of pantomime, "we will retire, and let you have a private interview."

Miss Fish rose reluctantly, for she was consumed by

curiosity, and she sat down again very promptly when Harry said :

“ Oh, don't go ! I've no secrets, thank Heaven ! I haven't the least idea what Robbins means by his ocular gymnastics. What have I lost, Robbins ? ”

“ A locket, sir ! ” said Robbins, desperately.

Harry started up with an inarticulate cry. Marjorie's little silver locket ! And he had not even missed it, in the strange confusion of bliss, and pain, and languor, and sorrow, that followed upon that disastrous night, after the fall of the bridge ! “ Let him come up at once ! ” he said impatiently. “ Tell him to make haste ! ”

Robbins disappeared, marvelling much. Of all the young gentlemen he had ever waited upon, Mr. Harry Kenric was the most “ *unconcealing* ” : but *he* had done his duty, which under any circumstances, was bound to be a consolation.

In a few moments, Johnson came in, grinning affably. He was not a man to be in the least abashed by an introduction to Morrison Kenric and Miss Fish, and he offered his hard brown hand to each in turn, with a hearty good-will. “ Glad to meet ye, sir ! Glad to know ye, ma'am,” he declared, in loud, stridulous tones : and to Harry, “ Hope ye air bettering. Eh ? ” Then he sat down, and wiped his glowing face upon a blue cotton handkerchief.

“ Thanks,” said Harry. “ I am doing very well, the Doctor thinks. But it's slow work.”

“ Be thankful ye air no worse,” said Johnson, solemnly. “ Ye must be a man for luck, I'll allow,” he added, as he drew from his pocket a small brown paper parcel, and began slowly to unfold it. “ My half-sister's son, Luke, he found thisher at the bottom o' the bluff whar ye fell. I'd a notion it mought be the gal's, but that 'un with buttons, ye know, an' the ramrod in his back-bone, he said how it's yourn ; an' I reckon a dollar 'll pay Luke fur his trouble.”

“ Yes, it's mine ! ” said Harry, stretching out his hand, eagerly. “ Not for a thousand dollars would I have lost it ! Father, pay him something handsome for the boy. ”

But as Johnson leaned forward to put the locket into

Harry's hand, Kenric interposed, saying, "Excuse me!" and took the trinket, himself, looking at it with a curiously startled expression, and quite oblivious of his son's request that Johnson should be paid "something handsome."

"Well, then," said Johnson, in awkward reminder, "I may as well be goin', eh?"

"Pay him what you please, Harry," said Kenric, tossing his purse to his son; and he walked away to the window with the locket.

When Johnson had made his acknowledgments for a ten-dollar piece, and was gone, Kenric came to his son's bedside, his face pale, his eyes burning.

"What is the matter?" inquired Miss Fish, with overpowering curiosity.

But he did not heed her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MARJORIE DEAR.

"WHERE did you get this?" Kenric asked, turning towards his son.

"It is hers," answered Harry; "Marjorie's. Why?"

"Where did *she* get it? Do you know what that letter L. stands for?"

"Surely, for *Lancaster*?" replied Harry, bewildered. "What else should it stand for?"

"Ah, that is what they tell you? How came the girl to be in possession of this?"

"It was her mother's."

Kenric started. "Her *mother's*? *Her* mother's?" he repeated, with incredulous emphasis. "It can not be!"

"But Marjorie is incapable of deception," said Harry, with some warmth.

"Her mother!" Kenric repeated again. "Strange, there is a likeness to Laura Dent; Miss Fish, have you not noticed it?"

"Oh, a slight, general likeness," Miss Fish replied. "Laura did have that kind of oval face and sedate expression. But what that can have to do with the locket, I am at a loss to see."

"This locket was my gift to my cousin, Laura Dent. The question is, how did it come into the possession of old Joe Lancaster's daughter, here on this Georgia farm?"

"He surely can tell, sir," said Harry. "I know nothing more than that it was her mother's."

"Where is Mr. Lancaster? Send Robbins to ask him to see me. Perhaps from him I may learn something of my cousin," said Kenric, eagerly. The day that he went to Mrs. Standridge, in Little Warrenton, for sympathy, came vividly back to him, and he sighed in retrospective self-pity at the memory of the keenest pang of his youth. "I tried to find out something about her, in Colorado," he said, sadly; "but I could only learn that she had suffered the extremity of poverty before she married a second time."

"Oh," said Miss Fish, with comfortable assurance, "You may depend upon it that Laura understood taking care of herself. It was her own fault, that move to the West. I always advised against it, but I wasn't heeded. So long as Mr. Cameron remained where he was known, he managed his affairs with judgment and success; but he was too old a man for a new country. I told Laura so, over and over again, and I suppose *now* she wishes she had made her husband listen to good advice. Mr. Cameron's health, that was the plea. He went to Colorado, and entered into the wildest speculations, and of course he lost *every cent*. You see, Harry, what happens, when people *will not* listen to advice."

"Thanks. I am not going to Colorado," said Harry, dryly.

Kenric smiled, but the smile was quickly lost in a sigh.

"However, the family have nothing to reproach themselves with," continued Miss Fish, complacently, after she had stabbed Harry with a look. "I know the Morrisons offered to help her by taking two of the children—I don't know how many there were—but **Laura** was always obstinate; she had her own ideas,

and she stuck to them. I haven't half the sympathy I might have had for her, if she had only been open to advice; and perhaps she is just as well satisfied to be forgotten."

"Do not speak of her in that way, I beg of you!" said Kenric. "Laura was once very dear to me, and I have not forgotten her."

"Really, Morrison, I *should* think that out of regard for Miss Wallis you would keep your old absurdities buried in oblivion," remonstrated Miss Fish.

"Did you ring for Robbins, Harry?" his father asked, disdaining to reply to Miss Fish.

"Yes, sir; and here he is now."

"Ah! Robbins, will you see Miss Lancaster, and ask her to say to Mr. Lancaster, that I will take it as a particular favor if he will meet me, as soon as possible, in the parlor, Robbins; say *in the parlor*. I won't trouble him to mount the stairs," he said, turning to his son.

"Surely, surely, you don't believe he came by that locket wrongfully?" cried Harry, in great anxiety.

"You will do nothing to humiliate him?" he entreated.

"For his daughter's sake! For my sake!"

"I think you may trust me," said his father, a little coldly. "I must learn the truth, that is all."

"If you will allow me, I will go with you," said Miss Fish, as Kenric was leaving the room. "Though she never would take my advice, I am interested to hear about poor, dear Laura."

Kenric made no reply; but she followed, nevertheless. When they entered the parlor, they found Miss Wallis seated there.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed, starting up in alarm at Kenric's pale and frowning face.

"Nothing that need make you tremble so," he answered, reassuringly, as he took her hand. "It is only that I have been brought, somewhat suddenly, face to face with the past."

She gave a little gasp, and clung to his arm.

"How very nervous you are this morning, my dear," said Miss Fish. "Perhaps you'd better not stay. Morrison has to see old Mr. Lancaster about—well, about a matter that concerns only the past."

"Pardon me," said Kenric. "If she will stay, I shall be glad. There is nothing in my past I am not willing Miss Wallis should know."

But Miss Wallis did not receive the compliment with her wonted grace. Miss Penny's direful words, "a lie bears bitter fruit," repeated themselves in her brain. Her color fluctuated from red to white, from white to red; a faintness came over her; she gasped for breath.

"It is the odor of these honey-suckles," she faltered, turning to pull down the window.

Kenric sprang to help her. "Pray, sit here," he said, putting her into a chair. "You are not well."

"Oh, yes, I am," she answered, with a faint smile; but she was very pale.

"I will go for your smelling-salts," said Miss Fish, and bustled away.

"You see I am quite well," she repeated, as her color slowly returned. "What were you saying about—Mr. Lancaster?"

"Oh—you've met him, I suppose?"

"Yes," she answered.

"How does he strike you; as an honest man, for instance? In word and deed?"

"Certainly," said Miss Wallis. The impulse to confess her relationship to poor old Gentleman Joe came upon her with maddening power; she rose, trembling, and stretched out her hands. "Hear me," she faltered; but before she could gather strength for her unwilling confession, Miss Fish returned, and thrust the smelling-salts under her nose, and Miss Wallis felt that she had received a reprieve of fate. What would she not have given, at a later day, to live this opportunity over again!

"Why, my beautiful Anastasia," said Kenric, "you are as bad as Harry! Do you take me for a monster of severity? I assure you, I should be as sorry as yourself, to wound poor old Gentleman Joe."

Before Miss Wallis could reply, Mr. Lancaster came feebly into the room, dressed in his best, and freshly shaved.

Kenric, remembering how the sobriquet *Gentleman Joe* had tickled his youthful fancy, felt a certain pleasure in perceiving its appropriateness: for Gentleman Joe had

the gift of manner ; he bore himself like a man who had made ready for a great occasion.

"I am very happy to meet you, Mr. Kenric, sir ; have known of you for many years past—a long-delayed—pleasure, sir ! I—I've been expecting you to ask for me. I was ready to meet you at any time, sir ; any time, at your convenience."

"I hope you haven't put yourself to inconvenience," said Kenric, touched by his haggard looks. "I could have gone to your room."

"The occasion, sir, is worthy the effort," said Gentleman Joe, with a wave of the hand, and a mighty sigh. "If you will kindly allow me to sit down?"

"Surely," said Kenric. "I fancy we shall have much to say, for I wish to ask you—"

"No, no," said Mr. Lancaster, lifting his hands imploringly. "Don't deprive me of the merit of a voluntary confession ; though it comes late, sir, I was on my way before you sent for me. I only waited for—Marjorie—to leave me. I couldn't bear her to hear what I have to say, for when she knows, she will not want to see my face again. I've done her a great wrong ; but see, now, I will make amends." He did not know that Marjorie stood in the door-way behind him, pale and frightened with her finger uplifted to command silence ; and no one dared send her away.

"I will tell the truth about Marjorie," continued Mr. Lancaster, "and give her up forever. For Marjorie ain't mine, and she never was. I ain't her father, and her name it ain't Lancaster——"

Before his audience could feel the full force of this most unlooked-for announcement, Marjorie uttered a cry, and sprang towards him. "It is not true ! Oh, it is not true !" she insisted, as she put her arms around him. "Do not believe him, for he is ill ; he is not himself when he says that. The earliest thing I can remember is my Daddy Joe. Oh, my Daddy Joe ! my Daddy Joe ! How can you deny me, your own little Marjorie ?"

Mr. Lancaster burst into tears. "It's the Lord's truth, Marjorie," he sobbed. "And that's why I ain't never let you call me father—I hadn't no right."

Marjorie staggered back like one who receives a blow.

"Who am I? What am I?" she cried, despairingly.

And Miss Penny with outstretched arms, answered from the door by which Marjorie had entered, "You are *mine*, Marjorie; mine still, mine always!"

But Marjorie shrank from her; she was not comforted; she felt herself isolated from them all.

Morrison Kenric had a horror of scenes. He frowned darkly, making up his mind that since there was to be a scene, he must bear his part in it with philosophic calm. "There can be no necessity, just now, for telling us this," he said with cold dignity. "But it is a question of great moment to me, how you came into possession of this locket?"

"There is more to tell, Marjorie! Marjorie!" said Mr. Lancaster piteously. He seemed to be conscious of her presence only; he paid no heed to Morrison Kenric. "You wasn't but the least bit of a baby when your father died, for your name it is Cameron——"

"*Cameron!*" ejaculated Miss Fish and Morrison Kenric in a breath.

——"and there was nothing for your mother to live on, and three little sisters, and an old helpless grandmother. I was in luck then; I had struck a way to make money, and I give your father a lift; but when he died, there wasn't any money in his fam'ly, and hardly enough to eat; and then the grandmother died, and the little sisters, and only you were left. And you were just the cunningest baby, and you took to me so! It was your own notion to call me Daddy Joe. But sickness came, and want, and so at last your mother married me; she married me for your sake."

He ceased, exhausted, and rested his head against Marjorie's arm; and she, trembling and bewildered, stroked his cheek, silent herself, amid the profound silence, that for a few seconds followed this confession.

Kenric was the first to speak. The name *Cameron* had given him the clue to Mr. Lancaster's story; yet his whole being revolted against the statement that his cousin had become the wife of this shiftless nonentity. "It is incredible!" he exclaimed. "Laura Dent, Laura Cameron, married to *you*?"

A short, discordant laugh broke from Miss Penny's lips. She had recognized that this was the woman

Morrison Kenric had loved in his youth ; that this was the woman whom, in the zeal of her sympathy for him, she had promised herself to hate forever ! And this woman's daughter, in whose veins ran no drop of Lancaster blood, was the dearest thing Miss Penny knew. "What fools we are when we are young" she said, and laughed again.

"I wasn't good enough for her, I know ; nothing like good enough for her," said poor old Gentleman Joe, abjectly ; "but I loved her, and I fairly ached with pity for her, she was that slight ; it looked like a breath would blow her away. And I wanted to make things easy for her. She didn't live but a few years, and when she died, she *gave* you to me, Marjorie ; and my conscience was easy to keep you because I had money then. And when your kin would write and write, I wouldn't let 'em know. There come more'n one letter from Morrison Kenric to this lawyer, and to that lawyer, tracing up your mother that was his cousin ; but I never let on I knew about her ; and though my luck quit me, and I got down in the world, Marjorie, I held on to you. I kept you out of your rights and chances in this life, because you were your mother's child, and I hadn't nothin' else to love !"

He struggled to his feet, and turned a helpless appealing look from one to another of the little group, who hardly yet realized the truth of his story.

"Yes ; you loved me ! You did love me ! You do love me !" murmured Marjorie, her eyes full of tears, and her hand on his arm.

"And I made myself a lie to you, Marjorie," he continued sadly, with averted mien ; "and now you'll despise me the rest of your days. It ain't in nature you'd forgive me what I've done, and I'll go away out of your sight, and leave you to them that have the right in blood to claim you,"

"Dear child, for your mother's sake !" said Kenric ; but as he opened his arms to clasp her, Mr. Lancaster uttered a cry of anguish, covered his eyes with his hands, and staggered back into the chair he had just quitted.

To that cry Marjorie's heart responded, instantly. She evaded the arms of her new-found relative, and threw

herself on her knees beside her Daddy Joe. "Despise you, *you*, my own dear Daddy?" she said, in tender reproach. "When I've been so long used to loving you, I could not live without you! I won't be given up! My mother gave me to you, and you are the only father I have ever known; let me be your child, always."

Involuntarily—even in spite of herself—Miss Wallis's eyes sought Miss Penny's, and through a mist of tears she met a look that spoke volumes of entreaty, of warning, of reproach—of utter scorn; but Miss Wallis, despite the tears in her eyes, was proof against that look. Was *she* to add another act to this little drama, to give another shock to this little audience? Impossible! And it was not so much lack of courage that prevented, as a keen sense of the ridiculous. Miss Wallis had no mind to be the heroine of a tragi-comedy; another time, a more fitting occasion,—or better yet, *silence*, silence forever. And with the others she turned away, leaving Marjorie alone with her Daddy Joe.

They did not speak much, these too, left alone in Miss Penny's prim parlor; they had touched the extremes of anguish and of joy, and their thoughts could find expression only in inarticulate murmurs and mute caresses.

They knew not how long they had been there when Morrison Kenric came back. "Marjorie," he said, "Robbins has rolled Harry out upon the upper 'gallery'—as you Southerners call a veranda—he cannot come to you; will you go up to him?"

"May I go, Daddy Joe?" Marjorie whispered, with a pretty blush.

"You wouldn't mind me, if I said no, I'm thinking," Mr. Lancaster made answer, as a shy smile lighted up his sad eyes.

There was never a nook so cosey as that big upper gallery, hung with honey-suckle, amid which vimineous lattice the mocking-birds built and sang; and where the vines were not, the boughs of the cherry-trees made a shadow against the glaring day, while fanning the air with a murmurous rustle of leaves, "delightful to the drowsy sense." Here it was that Marjorie met Harry for the first time, after that night beside the waters of Cedar Roaring.

"Marjorie, it is wonderful!" he said. "My father has been telling me. But it makes no difference; you are the same Marjorie to me; *Marjorie dear!*"

And Marjorie was magnanimous; she did not tell him how great a difference her Daddy Joe's revelation had made to his father.

"If only Memory had not died!" sighed Harry. "But for that, there would not be a shadow upon our joy."

Marjorie echoed his sigh.

"But we will never forget him, Marjorie. And neither shall others forget him. I have been thinking of a memorial. I don't know what it had best be; perhaps a new bridge, of stone, you know, with as commemorative tablet inscribed to Memory."

Marjorie looked at him, but did not speak. It seemed to her—knowing what she knew—an almost cruel irony to erect any such memorial to Memory Waits, and yet—what could she say against it?"

"I know a young civil engineer, capital fellow! would be glad to come down here and build it. Don't you like the idea, Marjorie? I want it to please *you*."

Marjorie's only answer was to burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"LOVE IN SEQUEL WORKS WITH FATE"

For years Miss Fish had had a controlling voice in the affairs of the Kenric family, and very naturally she expected still to make her influence felt in this new crisis. "Of course, you know, Anastasia, it is ridiculous for the girl to say she will not be separated from that old man," she remarked to Miss Wallis, when they were alone together, after the scene of the morning. "It is all very well as *sentiment*, but practically it is absurd. Fancy having that old—*Indescribable* forever around?"

"To me—what an inspiration he would be!" sighed Miss Wallis. "I reverence him for his courage. *Indescribable*, indeed!"

"Courage? As if it required *courage* to say that the girl belongs to better people than himself? I only wonder he never said it, long ago."

"You know nothing about it, Miss Fish; *Nothing*," said Miss Wallis, sadly.

"I know this about it," retorted Miss Fish. "He must be pensioned off, of course. It is the only way to be rid of him, I suppose."

"Try it!" Miss Wallis advised, maliciously.

"I shall," Miss Fish replied, serenely confident of carrying her point.

Miss Fish held the opinion, not ill founded, indeed, that Miss Marjorie Cameron would profit by five or six months at a finishing school known to Miss Fish as unapproachable in the art of polishing. Marjorie, she argued, cut off from all the associations of her former life, would the more rapidly acquire that grace and style, that air of fashion, without which it would never do to present her to society. But to this admirable plan there was one drawback upon which Miss Fish had not counted. Marjorie the meek, Marjorie the dove-like, refused absolutely to listen to any plan that involved separation from her Daddy Joe. To every argument, to every sarcasm, she had but the one reply; and when Miss Fish spoke of a pension, she simply said that her Daddy Joe could not be paid to part from her. For three days, to Harry's inextinguishable mirth, Miss Fish contended the point, before she abandoned the struggle in disgust.

"It is absurd! It is unreasonable! It is *ungrateful*!" she declared to Miss Wallis. "I was willing to be a friend to the girl for Harry's sake; but really it is too much to expect that we should consent to a perpetual association with that old remnant of humanity."

Miss Wallis sighed wearily. "It is impossible, my dear Miss Fish, to force an adjustment of this new relationship. It must be left to time, as to other influence than yours, I fancy. As for me, I am dying of this rural life! I must have distraction! I must be where I can see people, and forget—forget Miss Lancaster and

her farm forever. Let us go back to the hotel, Miss Fish ; immediately, if you please."

"But I think we are very well here Miss Fish objected. "I can't imagine why you are so anxious to leave. The hotel is not half so comfortable, and it is noisy." Inconsistency was Miss Fish's convenient jewel.

"Oh, I can't explain," cried Miss Wallis. "It is as if some calamity hung over me—here. Let me get away !"

"You are nervous," said Miss Fish. "But upon the whole, I think it may be as well to go," she assented, after a pause. "Marjorie will learn in time that her inexperience cannot dispense with me. I will send into town this afternoon and secure our rooms. I dare say we shall find a very pleasant society at the hotel."

Before Miss Fish's messenger returned from town, a carriage stopped at Miss Penny's gate, and a lady alighted ; a tall and slender woman, dressed in black that glittered with jet. Her dark hair was turning gray, but her face retained a delicate prettiness in middle-age. Miss Penny, as she watched her coming up the walk, was distinctly conscious that she had seen her before, though she could not tell when nor where. The stranger was coming towards the house, but suddenly she changed her course and walked across the lawn to the pavilion, where Miss Fish and Miss Wallis were seated. Marjorie, not far away, was watering her flowers ; for Marjorie, to Miss Penny's great joy, still felt that the farm was her home, that Miss Penny was her cousin.

Evidently this visitor either knew the ladies in the pavilion, or she had a right to know them, for she was accorded a ready welcome, and after a few moments, Miss Fish called Marjorie, and presented her.

"Some fashionable friend," thought Miss Penny. "Marjorie is entering her new world." And she turned away in bitterness of heart.

But presently Marjorie came running after her, through the porch and into the hall. "Cousin !" she cried, breathlessly. "There is a lady with Miss Fish ; she wishes to see Mr. Kenric"—for Marjorie had not yet learned to give him any other title—"She is an old friend—Mrs. Standridge."

Miss Penny started.

"But she says I am not to tell him her name. Is he up stairs?"

"Never mind, child," said Miss Penny. "I will tell him myself. Belle's and Henrietta's friend," she whispered to herself, as she went upstairs. "And what if she should know who *Miss Wallis* is, and should betray that secret?"

To some people this would have been a sweet revenge, but no thought of revenge had a place in Miss Penny's heart; the dread of the pain, the shock, the humiliation to Kenric and to her niece made her faint. It was not possible to call Mrs. Standridge aside and entreat her silence; the only course open was to tell Morrison Kenric the secret before Mrs. Standridge could tell him, and thus save him the shock of learning it first in public. In an instant Miss Penny's decision was taken. She found Kenric sitting with his son, and unceremoniously called him aside.

"Do you remember Mrs. Standridge, of Little Warrenton?" she asked.

"Most certainly! What of her?" he demanded, eagerly, disturbed at Miss Penny's serious face.

"She is here; she wishes to see you."

"I shall be delighted!" he exclaimed.

"But stay a moment," said Miss Penny, laying her hand on his arm. "She—I am afraid that she may tell—what Miss Wallis does not wish to be known."

"*Does not wish to be known?*" Kenric repeated, frowning. "What riddle is this?"

"I have come beforehand to tell you myself," Miss Penny went on hurriedly. "Sooner or later you *must* know it—"

"Has Miss Wallis commissioned you to tell me?" Kenric interrupted.

"No! No! I do it on my own responsibility. Poor fool! she cannot be made to realize the folly of trying to keep such a secret."

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Kenric. "What is it you would tell me?"

"Only this," Miss Penny answered, with a short laugh, "Miss Wallis—the beautiful Miss Wallis whom you are to marry, is the child of my sister Henrietta——"

Kenric recoiled. "It cannot be true!" he declared.

"Do you think I could be mistaken?" said Miss Penny. "As a baby, she was the dearest thing I had ever known—my sister's little Nannie! And for the sake of that dear babyhood, I would guard her happiness now."

"If it is true, why has she never told me herself?" Kenric asked, frowning. "Why does she leave it to you?"

"She does not leave it to me. She hopes I may never tell you. She could not endure you to know—because *she loves you*. She could not bear to have you know that you had promised to marry *the granddaughter of the man who hept the tavern in Little Warrenton*."

Kenric laughed harshly; the idea was undoubtedly displeasing.

"And because she loves you—*respect* her cowardice."

"She might have trusted me!" he murmured.

"So I felt! So I knew!" exclaimed Miss Penny.

"And yet you encouraged her silence?" said Kenric, reproachfully, not unwilling to excuse Anastasia at some one's else expense.

"Do you think I could do that?" Miss Penny asked, indignantly. "I knew who she was, the moment I saw her; but until the day you came she said never a word to me in acknowledgment of kinship. I am ashamed of her!" she went on, vehemently. "I refuse to claim her! But you—*you* have no right to be ashamed of her, for she loves you. The fear of making you ashamed, makes her ignore her mother's kindred. But my poor old father, the tavern-keeper is dead; my Uncle Joe has never discerned that she is her mother's daughter and as for me——"

"Why do you tell me all this, Penny?" said Kenric, "When you know that I have every reason to esteem you?"

"I have told you, to spare you a shock. Perhaps Mrs. Standridge will say nothing; but if she does, you are prepared."

"What a friend you are, Penny!" Kenric exclaimed, grasping her hands in both his own. "Aren't you coming with me to see Mrs. Standridge? I am sure

she would like to see you ; you are far better worth the visit than I."

But Miss Penny said "No," and turned away. She wished only to be alone. Her heart was very sad. She thought of the days long gone, when her highest ambition had been to possess a farm of her own ; and now, though she had achieved this ambition, she found herself, somehow defrauded of the best that life can give. Though she had won the highest esteem of the community in which she lived, her sister's child recoiled from acknowledging kinship with her, and the girl she had cherished as her very own, turned out to be the daughter of the woman she had vowed, in her extravagant youth, to hate all her life long for Morrison Kenric's sake. "Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges." There was no wisdom in hating or in loving, Miss Penny decided in bitterness of spirit, feeling herself deserted. "Mine is the first place in no human heart," she sadly thought and then was angry with herself because for some reason she thought of Dr. Griffith at the same moment.

When Kenric went out to the pavilion, he found Dr. Griffith just arrived there.

"Well !" said the Doctor, with satisfaction. "Here's more of Little Warrenton, sir, come to Briarville. Here's Mrs. Standridge——"

"Mrs. Standridge *from Little Warrenton* ? ?" murmured Miss Wallis, uneasily.

"Now, Doctor ! You marplot !" exclaimed that lady, as she rose to offer her hand to Kenric. "I wanted to test his remembrance."

"I should have stood the test, I assure you," returned Kenric, taking her hands. "How little you are changed ! And how glad I am to see you !"

"Thanks ! That is charming ; like your old self. I've no doubt his present self, which is *not* old, is charming too, Miss Wallis. I believe you are admitted to be the judge on that point, if we may credit the report that is rife in Savannah. But as for *me* —don't say I am so little changed ! Why I had to translate myself into the past, I assure you, to awaken Miss Fish's memory."

"It has been a long time since we met," Miss Fish murmured. "But indeed, Sophie, you are not so

much changed ; you have still that ready tongue."

"Ah, Miss Fish? It is the occasion, I assure you. This meeting with old friends — and then *two* such surprises as I have had ! First, in meeting Laura Dent's daughter here, in this pretty girl, and then in learning, as Dr. Griffith has just told me, that this jewel of a farm is owned and 'bossed' by our friend, Penny Lancaster. Wonders will never cease. But I don't know why it should seem so wonderful. Her mother was a Donald, and more energy——"

Kenric could not resist a laugh.

"Yes ; you always did laugh at that, Morrison," Mrs. Standridge rattled on. "Mayn't I call him 'Morrison,' Miss Wallis? You see I used to know him before you did."

Miss Wallis bowed and smiled, conscious that Mrs. Standridge was studying her curiously.

"Yes," said Miss Fish. "Morrison met Miss Wallis first in New York, last fall, with the Judge, her father."

"Oh?" exclaimed Mrs. Standridge. "You are not a daughter of Mr. Henry Wallis, then?"

"No," said Anastasia, with decision. She did not like the daughters of Mr. Henry Wallis.

"Ah, *now* I understand that Donald likeness!" cried Mrs. Standridge, gleefully clapping her hands. "Miss Fish, how you are deceived about that first meeting! Morrison knows better."

Kenric smiled ; Miss Wallis cast upon her an imploring glance, and quickly averted her face ; but it was only Kenric who saw this.

"What a charming romance!" Mrs. Standridge exclaimed, as she leaned forward and caught Miss Wallis's left wrist. Before any one was aware what she would do, except Miss Wallis herself, she had pushed up the broad gold band—just as Miss Penny once had done—and laid her finger upon a *scar*. "Doctor, *you* remember this?" she said.

The Doctor started violently, and threw up his hands with a gasp of surprise. "Knocks me backward twenty years!" he stammered, when he had recovered breath.

Miss Fish stared.

As for Miss Wallis, she sat pale and rigid but unflinching ; the thing she greatly feared had come upon

her, but she was resolved to meet the crisis with dignity. Kenric placed his hand upon her chair, but she did not heed him.

"Nannie Lyndham," said Mrs. Standridge, looking up at Kenric with a smile, her finger still upon the scar.

"I was," said Miss Wallis with dignity.

Mrs. Standridge withdrew her finger, suddenly conscious that something was amiss. "I beg a thousand pardons!" she exclaimed, with a look of distress that was almost comic. "Have I been indiscreet?"

"Not at all," said Kenric courteously, as he laid his hand upon Miss Wallis's wrist. "Of course I knew, my dear madam; but to recall my earliest meeting with this lady, is a reminder, alas! of my years."

"There! I *have* been indiscreet!" Mrs. Standridge laughed.

"Pray, what does all this mean?" demanded Miss Fish.

"It means," replied Kenric, "that Miss Wallis has the *honor* to be the niece of Miss Penthesilea Lancaster, the most admirable woman that I know."

"That's so!" ejaculated the Doctor. "Hem! Ha!"

"Ah! Are you there, Doctor?" said Mrs. Standridge. The Doctor wished he had held his tongue.

"Well!" said Miss Fish irately. "I must say that I consider myself imposed upon. Decidedly."

"Is it an imposition that you should have learned a little secret sooner than was intended?" said Kenric, with a good-humored smile.

"Does M—M—Miss Lancaster know?" stammered Dr. Griffith.

"I should suppose so," Kenric answered. "Doesn't she know?" he added, turning to Miss Wallis.

Miss Wallis looked at him, gratefully; her eyes said far more than she could put in words. "Yes; certainly my Aunt Penny knows," was her answer. ("And she has told him," was her thought).

"Oh, I am so glad!" sighed Marjorie.

Kenric turned to her, smiling. "My dear child," he said, "will you go and say to her that we would *all* like to stay to tea? Wouldn't you like to stay to tea, Mrs. Standridge? And you can see my son, Harry, you know."

"Charming!" replied Mrs. Standridge. "I do not know which I most wish to see, Harry Kenric, or that wonderful Penny Lancaster."

"You will have to see Miss Penny first, as tea is so nearly ready. And afterwards you shall see my son."

But before they sat down to table, Anastasia had stolen away, and had found Miss Penny alone. "Won't you kiss me?" she whispered, timidly. "It's all right."

And Miss Penny understood. She took her niece in her arms and kissed her, and between laughing and crying, she said, "If he hadn't been staunch to you, Nannie, he shouldn't have stayed another night under my roof."

And Marjorie set forth the tea-table, for Miss Penny had lost her head.

After tea, when they all went upstairs to see Harry, Dr. Griffith discovered Miss Penny alone upon the porch.

"And you knew it all the time?" he said.

"Yes; I knew it, the first day I saw her in Briarville."

"Well! That accounts for your dazed look that morning. Was she *ashamed* of you, Penny?" he asked, laying his hand on hers with a sympathy Miss Penny understood.

"I don't think she was ashamed of me," Miss Penny sighed. The Doctor's sympathy must have been acceptable, for she did not withdraw her hand until she had answered.

"Well! well!" said the Doctor. "When the young fellow is on his feet again, they'll be moving, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," responded Miss Penny.

"Full of their new plans. All of 'em. Old Joe too, eh?"

"Of course. Marjorie, you know, will not be parted from him."

"Well he's got adaptability. The gift of all the Lancasters, I reckon. But it's downright robbery; so far as you're concerned, grabbing Marjorie——"

Miss Penny smiled, "So Morrison Kenric says," she replied. "But he is only doing his duty, and that's the most any of us can do."

The Doctor sat long silent, meditating a remark Mrs. Standridge had made to him years ago, regarding cowardice in love. At last he said, with something of the bashfulness of a boy :

"A man likes straightforwardness, when it comes to marrying."

"I suppose he does," Miss Penny admitted. She thought he was thinking of Anastasia and Kenric, as he was, incidentally.

"You and I have known each other a long time, Penny. We've nothing to hide."

Miss Penny made no reply, and the Doctor tried a new course.

"You're going to be very lonely, when they're all gone."

"No, I am not!" said Miss Penny, decidedly.

The Doctor was not a man of wit; it did not occur to him to turn this denial to his own advantage; he took it in the sober earnest with which it was spoken. "You think not," he said, gravely; "but you are—going to be lonely. You've given out your heart to all these others, and they'll go and leave it empty—unless you'll take me in?"

"Nobody that is always busy has time to be lonely," Miss Penny made answer, pusillanimously ignoring the Doctor's final suggestion, and then answering it remotely by declaring, "I'm not minded to give up my farm."

"It's not your farm, it's *yourself* I'm *always* thinking of," said the Doctor, his courage mounting with occasion. "I'm not a man that needs a woman to take care of me." Miss Penny glanced at him askance, and thought how comfortable she might make him, only by brushing his clothes.

"I've plenty for all I'm ever likely to need," he went on, eagerly. "Enough for us both. In the way of money. And I don't need to tell you what I think of you, Penny. Lord! you've known it, all these years. No friend you ever had has been so constant as Malcolm Griffith."

Yes! Miss Penny had known it all these years, and she blushed to think she had never rightly prized this devoted, patient affection until now that the prospect of loneliness appalled her. Yet in spite of prospect and

retrospect, when Dr. Griffith, following up the advantage he saw he had gained at last, urged her to marry him now ; to-morrow ? next week ? next month ? that ungrateful Penny Lancaster would only say :

“I’ll think of it.”

THE END.

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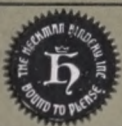
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